

BRITISH RULE IN MALLABHUM

(1751 - 1833)

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C O N T E N T S

1. Introduction
2. Historical background of Mallabhum.
3. Relations of the Rajas of Bishnupur with
East India Company - a revenue and
administrative history of the Jungle Mahals
upto 1833.
4. Agrarian Relations of Mallabhum and the
Jungle Mahals.
5. Economic condition of Bishnupur and the
history of production and distribution of
cotton and silk textiles.
6. Conclusion. 258
7. Bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

British Raj in India brought far-reaching consequences on the life and economy of the people. The benefits acclaimed most often were peace, law and order, western education, centralised administration, political unification of the country and the consequent growth of a feeling of nationality, expansion of railways, telegraphs, hospitals and the like.¹ But economically the results of British rule were perhaps injurious. It resulted in "continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country".² A question has often been asked about the 19th century economic history of India. What was the true nature and sequel to the foundation of British-Raj in India? A section of scholars who maintained the conception of "Traditional India" held that India's subsistence economy in the pre-British period was "static and self-contained". In the 18th century this socio-economic system withstood the challenges of the western economy rejuvenated after the Industrial Revolution and reinforced by the power of the modernised Imperial state machinery. The inevitable results were rapid destruction of village-handicrafts, steady decline of agriculture and continuous frustration of its Industrial enterprises.³ The Indian nationalist

writers of the 19th and 20th centuries and some Marxist intellectuals of the present century are of opinion that the exploitative character of British rule is the cause of increasing misery and drainage of national resources and income. Huge drain on India's resources from the post-Plassey years, described by some as the "Plassey plunder", was indeed a highly remarkable feature in her economic history which inevitably caused her impoverishment. Writers like Montgomery Martin,⁴ Brooks Adams⁵ and Digby⁶ refer to large quantity of "Indian Plunder". According to Verelst⁷, during the five years from grant of Diwani, goods and bullion of the total value of 4,91,611 million sterling went out of the country. Dow (who wrote about 1700 A.D. "That with a peculiar want of foresight, they (the English East India Company) began to drain the reservoir, without turning it into a stream to prevent it from being exhausted,"), remarks that Bengal lost yearly to Europe on account of this drain 1,477,500 pounds sterling⁸. A modern writer is of opinion that during 1757 to 1780 A.D. the amount of drain on Bengal's resources was 38 million pounds sterling in the important items only and to the exclusion of some others.⁹ Some modern writers, however, do not believe in the vast export of bullion from Bengal to England. Holden Furber writes that "direct exports of bullion to Europe were so trifling as to be negligible"¹⁰. Some western scholars led by Lord Curzon accompanied by T. Morison, G.F. Shirras,

Vera Anstey and others refused to accept the exploitation thesis and the "drain theory", attribute the failure of the Indian economy to respond to the influences of the Industrial Revolution, to the "Society's other worldliness, to its lack of enterprise and to the caste-exclusiveness of groups within the society".¹¹ But this school of opinion failed to reveal the exploitive character of the British Raj. The scholars emphasised the beneficial nature of the British rule and blamed natural hindrances like floods and other natural calamities, low-productivity of the soil as barriers to industrial developments.¹² The arguments put forward by them for India's failure to industrialise as owing to the brevity of the gestation period are not convincing due to the absence of adequate research and non-availability of the economic data to prove India's backwardness on regional basis. The fundamental fact which remained unnoticed to the scholars is that in absence of any basic structural change in the society which may be studied in terms of a region, inspite of its manifold economic activities, there can not be any development and growth¹³. It was this necessity to study the available economic data of a particular region to verify the above-mentioned arguments to explain India's backwardness that has prompted the scholars to study the economic history of a particular area of the

South-West Bengal presidency as a typical case. Therefore, the economic history of Bishnupur (a particular region belonging to the South-West Bengal presidency which includes three modern states of Bengal, Behar and Orissa) is to be studied behind the vast panorama of economic developments taking place all over India since the 17th century A.D. The regional analysis of economic phenomena would prompt scholars to trace the evolution of ancient institutions associated with the agrarian economy and prevalent religio-ethical norms which took its modern shape during the formative phases of British rule in India.

In 1805, the district of Jungle-Mahal was created which included the forest tracts of Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum and Purulia districts¹⁴. It was created as a safeguard against any possible peasant resistance movements. The second and third decades of the 19th century witnessed sporadic agrarian movements which touched the district to a great extent, and caused widespread chaos and turmoil. In 1833, however, the district of 'Jungle-mahal' was abolished for better administrative purposes in order to safeguard the interests of the original producers and to check future possibility of recurrence of their movements.

Bishnupur estates which was the seat of Malla power

for successive generations, had some socio-economic importance to which the attention of the scholars are drawn. This region belonging to the district of Jungle-Mahal (from 1805-1833) had its ethnic and cultural homogeneity which was further intensified by the unity of historical traditions.

The period under present studies witnessed peasant revolts in the Jungle-Mahals leading to a climax in the chuar rebellion of 1799 and the Naik revolt of 1833. From 1751, a continuous process of development of these peasant resistance movements against the British rule as a whole may be studied as ultimately finding its climacteric point in the popular aspect of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857¹⁵. These movements associated with the maratha-incursions and lawless elements in the Bengal-Orissa border areas resulted in the complete break-down of the law and order system. The genesis of these movements lies more or less in the impact of the British rule. It demands for an elaborate research of the dynamic economic forces of the period, a study not only of the agrarian problems but the changes which were taking place in the productive sector, in the changing pattern of land-use, as well as in the demographic picture, in the declining trends of village-level industries with commercial importance, in the position of internal and external trade connected with the issues of indigenous and foreign participations, in the

role of the indigenous entrepreneurs and fast deterioration in the condition of the actual producers of the soil.

(2)

This region received little attention from the historians. Some writers wrote about the cultural and social heritage of the people of this area without having a knowledge of the historical background of the people. In ancient Sanskrit, Pali and the Bengali literatures (like Ghanaram's Dharma-Mangal¹⁶ and Kabi Kankan Chandi¹⁷) and even in the Vedic literature and Jain literary work (like Acharanga Sutta) the mention of the place, ^{names} and the political history of the region could be found. But the actual ways of life of the people and the rate and volume of investment of the state in public works or the volume of trade carried on by the then merchants with the neighbouring countries are not focussed in these printed literary works.

In the muslim period some literary works like Tarikh-l- Firuz Shahi by Shams-l- Sairaj Afif (14th century A.D.), Ain-i- Akbari of Abul Fazl (16th century A.D.) and Seir-ul-Mutakherin (18th century A.D.) by Ghulam Husain Tabatabai and other minor works like Riyaz-us-Salatin of Maulavi Abd-us-Salam not only mentioned the political history of the period but also threw lights

on the economic life of the people. However, their writings were vitiated by their religious fanaticism and class character and the writers of these works ignored the prevalent socioeconomic phenomenon which shaped historical developments. The accounts of the contemporary foreign travellers like Bowrey and Streynsham Master as well as the printed factory records edited by Foster are, however, more important to understand the trade and industrial developments of the period. These accounts and records though lacking in statistical data, help the scholars to have a general knowledge of the trade and finances of the period which are important features in shaping the country's economic destiny¹⁸.

The English civilian writers like J.C.Price, W.W.Hunter and W.K.Firminger on the basis of Collectorate records as well as revenue and judicial records have drawn a very dismal picture of the struggle between the local elements and the early conquistadors in the early phase of British rule in Bengal¹⁹. The editors of old and new district Gazetteers and Census hand books of different districts (1951 and 1961) have more or less followed their beaten tracks. These civilian writers though consulted the archival sources, had no knowledge in Indian languages. Sometimes they had to depend on the

vernacular interpreters and Pundits. Because of their limitations as foreigners, many inaccuracies had crept into their writings. Moreover, their sense of white-man's superiority narrowed down their out-look for impartial observation. They had no adequate scholarship of their own which are indispensable for modern historical researches. They had gone through the original sources, but they did not consult the more important indigenous sources and only relied on some unhistorical Indian traditions and chronicles.²⁰ It may be said that these civilian writers failed to judge the Indian view points and tried their best only to satisfy the commercial and imperial interests of the rulers²¹.

The growth of Indian nationalism and the spirit of protest against the British rulers, however, helped the 20th century historical literature to come to the lime light. In these writings also there are a few limitations. These works are not based on original sources such as Indian literary works as well as British archival materials preserved in the local records rooms like salt and embankment records and as such they are lacking in sufficient statistical data. Their anti-British viewpoints ignored the variations in local conditions and historical traditions as well as socio-cultural values of the people for generations together.

In truth the economic history of the region in the first half of the 19th century as a typical evidence of the traditional economy of India was relatively backward. It failed to cope with the impact of the British rule, the challenge of a capitalist colonial government of Europe. Non-availability of statistical data is a great hindrance to prove any decrease in per-capita income or fall in the per acre yield. The income more or less remained static giving no scope to a rapid change in the existing economic structure and relations.

(3)

Probably from the 6th to the 4th centuries B.C. this region came into contact with the Indo-Aryan forces of the northern part of India. In the second phase the wave of Islam touched the cultural life of this region. In the final phase, a new force accompanying a warrior-cum-trader class of Europe gradually transformed the social frame-work of this country.

The name of the region ending in 'Bhum' suffix (Mallabhum) suggest that the region was predominantly inhabited by the people of the soil²². This country sometimes had been subdued by military adventurers who were either aboriginals themselves or the Aryan immigrants. The royal family of Mallabhum probably immigrated from

Northern India. The tribal chiefs of Mallabhum with 'Singh' title with the blessings of the tribal goddesses and their priests were raised by the primitive community to the highest position of glory²³. The monarchical conceptions in relation to a predominantly agrarian economy, however, remained unaltered²⁴.

Common land was held under community ownership of the tribal society and the surplus produce of the village belonged to all the members of the self-sustained economic units. The extreme backwardness in the mode of agricultural production and the natural calamities like floods and famine resulted in insufficiency of production²⁵. The king in this region was neither an autocrat nor his functions were conceived in terms of legislation as it had been maintained by some scholars²⁶.

In the Hindu period the system of overlordship was neither feudal nor quasi-feudal in nature. The system of land tenure and taxes in kind and service assessed by laws and conventions of the tribal society remained unchanged even in the pre-British period²⁷.

The mobility of society was revealed in its steady negation to the predominance of the priest or warrior classes in the society²⁸. The ancient literary

works show that 'Kalaketu' of Kabikanakan-Chandi or 'Kalu Dom' of Dharma-Mangal made their fortunes from the humble origin in the society²⁹.

In the second phase the Afghans and the Mughals in order to centralise revenue administration introduced an organised money-economy and placed a new order of money-lending and warrior classes over the peoples of frontier regions. Excepting a few changes in the existing rent-rolls and the boundaries of political units, the ancient agrarian system remained more or less unchanged. The little changes in land-revenue administration introduced by ~~the~~ Todar Mall's revenue system found its ^{ultimate} expression in the 'Jamma Kameil Tummari' of Murshid Quli Khan³⁰. In the Khalsa portion of lands the system of tribute (Peskash) from the chiefs of Vishnupur and Panchet remained static³⁰³¹. But the substitution of produce-rent by a fixed money-rent to the ruler and the predominant role of the money-lending class of Gujrat and Rajasthan and the gradual introduction of a quasi-feudal and anti-hereditary land system brought some glaring changes in such predominantly agrarian economy³².

During the later Mughal period the absence of strong centralised administration, constant drain of wealth

from this region to Delhi as well as tyranny of the local officers both military and money-lending classes resulted in the deterioration of the general economic condition of this region³³. The inevitable result was conversion of common lands into feudal lands based on the principle of private ownership, decline of village commodity production and rapid pauperisation of rural labourers. The development of trade and industry, however, resulted in the development of art, architecture and literature of the period. In this economic environment the cowries and metal currencies began to take predominant role as the medium of exchange and standard of payment.³⁴ In this period it was Vaisnavism as propounded by Shri Chaitanya which synchronised with the polarisation of power among the Bhum-ending tracts leading to the rise of Mallabhum and Bhanjabhum to pre-eminence³⁵.

In the latter part of the 18th century the introduction of the British rule is an important incident in the history of this region. The East India Company's measures relating to the revenue administration steadily resulted in the tacit acceptance of the Zamindar's ownership over the estates but not over its usufruct³⁶. Such land revenue system was characterised by over-assessment which led to the sporadic outbursts of peasant

resistance movements in this region. The genesis of these peasant movements definitely lies in the defects of the Permanent Settlement. For over two centuries of British rule the dominant character of the production relations within Bengal villages remained semi-feudal. Small size of plots, labour oriented farming and master-serf relationship between the Jotedar and the Bargadar were the salient features of such system. Rural society was divided mainly in three antagonistic classes viz, (1) landlords (zamindars, Talukdars, Patnidars, etc.) and rich farmers (Jotedars, gantidars, haoladars), (2) self-sufficient peasants (ryots) and (3) share-croppers (bargadars) and agricultural labourers (Kishans)³⁷.

These peasant movements sometimes secured the active support of the local rulers. It was because of the clash of interests of the native rulers with the Company's Government developed on the issue of land settlement over the estates. The British land revenue administration was no doubt experimental. These movements compelled the Government to introduce some changes in the land revenue system from time to time. By the beginning of the 19th century a tendency to invest surplus agricultural incomes in purchasing lands got a new momentum.³⁸ Sales of estates and ejectment from holdings compelled the

Krishans (agricultural producers) to move towards urban areas. The new landlord-capitalists coming from the urban areas of Bengal increased their size of land holdings but no appreciable improvements in agricultural methods of production could be undertaken in an exploitative colonial frame work. Even the Government order for the grant of Pattas by the Zamindars to the ryots in order to save the interest of the original producers was not complied with in most cases.

The period from 1803 to 1833 witnessed sporadic agrarian disturbances against the new landed aristocracy, money-speculators and oppressive Government officials. Such unrest among the peasantry was due to economic dislocation arising out of revenue experiments of a colonial government, new mode of investments in landed estates, in the changing pattern of land-use, growing land-hunger of the producers with heavy concentration of population in agriculture after the decline of internal and external trade and ruin of village-level industries like textile and salt, as well as developing frontier troubles arising out of country-wide gang robbery led by the destitute service-tenure holders.

The peasant resistance movements from 1803 to 1833 failed to draw popular support. These revolts,

however, assumed the character of militant regionalism not only against the British capitalists, but also against the British-backed middle class "Babu" speculators. These movements were confined within a limited circle of conditional tenure-holders and their Paiks and the landless peasants cultivating their lands on short-term leases. The ryots with stock for cultivation and the landed aristocrats remained outside its spell of influence.

(4)

Bishnupur was famous for its cotton, silk-textile, tobacco and lac-dye industries. After 1765 the English East India Company's policy of investment led to the growth of cotton and silk textile industries of Bishnupur. These village-level industries flourished to a great extent and number of weaving villages came into existence near the European factories and Residencies. The French and the Dutch traders gradually lost their field and the English East India Company came to the forefront. The English Company though established their monopoly of trade, but they failed to maintain the supply of raw materials at a cheap rate which were essential for the development of these industries³⁹.

In some factories Italian methods were adopted for the production of raw-silk, but no steps were taken

to increase the wages of the labourers³⁸⁴⁰. The native adventurers failed to offer a parallel market as well as selling facilities to the artisans due to lack of adequate capital formations. It enabled the Company to establish their monopoly in trade as well as in manufacture³⁹⁴¹.

The Maratha misrule in Orissa in the shape of increased abwabs, tolls and customs duty on raw materials led to rapid transplantation of weaving population from Orissa to the neighbouring weaving centres of Bankura, Midnapore and Birbhum⁴⁰⁴².

The last half of the 18th century, however, witnessed the remarkable development in the trade and production of silk and cotton textile Industry. It was possible for expanding market facilities and laissez faire policy undertaken by the Company's Government and the increased participation of the private traders in the field. The last two decades of the 18th century witnessed increase in the volume of investments in cotton and silk textile manufactures. But with the death of John Cheap, the Resident of Sonamukhi, the cotton textile manufacture in Sonamukhi and Surul received a death-blow. However, the silk industry continued to develop till the 30's of the 19th century⁴¹⁴³.

The socio-economic position of the cultivators and the artisans of this region touched the lowest ebb under the rule of East India Company. The defects of the Permanent Settlement associated with the gradual decline of the village level industries turned the financial lots of these common people into meagre one. It would not be wise to think that the import of machine-made textile products from Manchester was directly responsible for the decline of textile industries of this region. Such decline ⁴²₄₄ was, however, visible during the phase of the Maratha incursions in this region from the beginning of the 18th century ⁴³₄₅. After the 60's of the 18th century the temporary growth of the textile industries of this region was due to the heavy demands of such products in the European and the Asiatic markets. When such artificial demands came to an end the textile industries began to wither away. The decline was also due to the growth of commercial agriculture which turned the cotton fields into fallow lands or into paddy and jute fields in the 30's of the 19th century ⁴⁴₄₆. The growth of capitalist economy in India in the second half of the 19th century could not be held responsible for the decline of textile Industries.

But the competition of the British manufacturers

might be regarded as one of the causes for the decline of the textile industries.

The decaying village-economy, therefore, found its expression in the protests of the original producers in the agrarian sector against the super-imposed British rule. The rural people, the toiling masses who formed the majority of population could not anticipate such economic system ^{45/47}.

The history of the early British rule in this region was, therefore, the history of official greed and tyranny in the shape of 'exploitation', which undoubtedly shattered the economic condition of the agrarian sector of rural Bengal. The out-break of a series of peasant-resistance movements in the period under review might be regarded as protests against the misrule of the Company's Government for the improvement of the socio-economic position of the toiling masses which, however, did not meet with any spectacular success.

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Supplies of bullion to the other settlements

of the English	1,284,008
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Goods, Stores, bills etc. to those

settlements	620,337
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Charges on the European ships of the

English	3,037,266
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4,941,611

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Tara Sankar Panigrahi
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DE GOLF VAN BENGALIE

(Map of Bengal
drawn by Van
Den Broecke
in A.D. 1660.)

Page - 25

CHAPTER - I

EARLY HISTORY OF BISHNUPUR BEFORE 1751

TOPOGRAPHY:

Bishnupur estate in the Bankura district (Now in West Bengal) was in the centre of the Burdwan division in the 19th century. The district town of Bankura is situated between $22^{\circ} 38'$ and $23^{\circ} 38'$ north latitude and its westernmost extremity by $86^{\circ} 36'$ east longitude. The name of its chief town owes its origin to the influence of the aboriginal population of the region and almost the whole district belonged to the estate of the Bishnupur Raj family.

The modern Bishnupur in the district of Bankura is the headquarter of the sub-division of the same name situated in $23^{\circ} 5' N.$ and $87^{\circ} 20' E.$, a few miles south of the Dhalkisor river.¹ The early references to this land and neighbouring areas may be found in the Jaina Acharanga Sutra² (which according to some scholars probably dates from the 6th to the 5th century B.C.). A short inscription on the stone-wall of a cave

-27-

in the Susunia hill³ about 19 K.M. north west of Bankura which has been ascribed to the 4th century A.D. also referred to the existence of a populous principality within the jurisdiction of modern Bishupur. In the Muslim accounts also the name of Bishnupur finds mention - Abul Fazl in his Ain-i-Akbari mentioned the volume of revenue paid by its Rajah and the existence of a number of forts. In English official records the district of modern Bankura was known as "Bishenpore" and as late as 1834 a joint magistrate and deputy Collector was placed in charge of "Bishenpore" with headquarters at "Bancoorah". Between 1834 and 1855 A.D. the name of the district changed from Bishenpore to Bankura.⁴

Bishnupur's name was, however, omitted when the new district styled as "Jungle Mahals" was created in 1805. In 1809 by an order of the Board of Revenue, an Assistant Collector was posted at Bankura for the collection of revenue of this tract. In 1833 the district of "Jungle Mahals" was broken up and the former Bishenpore territories came under the jurisdiction of the Magistrate - Collector of Burdwan, but a joint magistrate and Deputy Collector was stationed at Bankura

to look after the affairs of the Bissenpore territories. In 1837 Bissenpore territory was finally truncated from the Burdwan district and formed a separate district with its headquarters at Bankura.⁵

EARLY HISTORY:

The Nanda, the Maurya and the Gupta rules were short-lived in the south-west Bengal in which Bishnupur forms a part. Their rules might have had an effect on the existing Governments in the small, self-governed productive units. A Midnapur copper plate grants prove that in the 7th century this region was a province within the Kingdom of Sasanka. Since the 8th century A.D. there were the rise of the local dynasties of the Bhanjas of the Bhajabhum - the Dattas of the south-west Midnapore, the Malla Rajas of Bishnupur and the Manas in the territories lying in the north-east of Orissa.

This period from the 8th to the 11th centuries also marked the rise of the eastern Gangas and of the Bhauma-Karas in Orissa, who later on came to make themselves felt in the political arena of the South-west Bengal. The rise of the imperial Gangas and later on of

the Gajapatis might have had produced a tendency of transmigration of population from Orissa in search of cultivable lands towards the Bhum-ending tracts of the "Jungle Mahals" inhabited by the aboriginal elements of the population.⁶ This conclusion may be drawn from the traditions attached to the rise of the local dynasties in the Jungle Mahals with Bhum-suffix.

The period between the 5th and the 11th centuries A.D. also marks an epoch in the history of Bengal when the process of feudalisation of the land-tenure was complete. This may be partly due to absence of any powerful imperial authority stretching for a period of seven centuries which could hold together the disintegrating forces at work in the small monarchical states. The period also marked the decay in the oceanic trade passing through the coastal ports of Orissa, Tamralipta and the Ganges. This might have brought economic decline in the entrepreneurial classes in the countryside. The phenomenon was associated with the paucity of precious metals and currency which may be guessed from the literature and from the wide circulation

-30-

of cowrie currency and this might have brought change in the distribution of the man-power due to influx of population from the western Orissa as well as from the country side to the urban areas. The epigraphic evidences testify to the fact that the period heralded the emergence of the intermediary interests in the land-tenure, in the administrative hierarchy as well as in the commercial sectors. Consequently, qualitative changes in the village-level socio-economic units occurred, marked by the assertion of the rights and privileges of the village-level administrative units which found expression in the rural revolts and the establishment of the numerous local dynasties of the Bhum-Rajas.⁷

THE HISTORICAL BACK GROUND OF THE BHUM-TRACTS

Sometimes the revolts took place under the leadership of the traditional armed-retainers of the village chiefs against the financial extortion of the military-revenue officers of the Orissan rulers. In this critical moment of political anarchy the people of Bhum-ending tracts succeeded in having their own rulers being backed by the traditional religious leaders consisting of neo-brahmins and worshippers of the mystic popular

cults.⁸ That the south-west Bengal developed political and ethnic homogeneity with the adjoining forest tracts was attested by the existence of numerous petty principalities with Bhum-suffix.⁹ The emergence and growth of Bhum-tracts from the stray literary evidences is an important subject of studies. The epigraphic evidences regarding the origin of some of the tracts with Bhum suffix goes back to a much earlier period than the 15th century. Blochmann is inclined to regard the Bhum - ending territories as a single block of land.¹⁰

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF BISHNUPUR RAJ UPTO 1751:

Historically, Bishunupur (popularly known as Mallabhum) is the central place in the district of Bankura as it was the capital of the Rajas of Bishnupur, who even as late as the period of Muslim rule, though nominally tributary to the Nawabs of Murshidabad, frequently exercised independent authority.¹¹ The origin of the Rajas of Bishnupur may be traced as far back as the 8th century A.D. The stories relating to their early history are mainly based on traditions and literary evidences. Like many other Bhum countries of eastern India Mallabhum by the 16th century A.D. comprised

substantial part of the modern district of Bankura. Holwell narrates the following account about the lands of the Rajas of Bishnupur :

"To the west of Burdwan, sometime northerly, lie the lands belonging to the family of Rajah Gopaul Sing, of the Razpoot Bramin tribe. They possess an extent of sixteen days travel; this district produces an annual revenue of ^(rupees) between 30 and 40 lac; but from the happiness of their situation, he is perhaps the most independent Rajah of Indostan; having it always in his power to overflow his country, and drown any enemy that comes against him: as happened at the beginning of Soujah Khan's government; who sent a strong body of horse to reduce him: these he suffered to advance far into his country; then opening the dams of the rivers he destroyed them ^(to) a man. This action discouraged any subsequent attempts to reduce him but if the frontiers of the district were to invest, as to prevent the exit of the merchandise of his country, might easily be done; he would be presently brought to obedience; and would be glad to compound for a tribute of 20 lac per Annum. As it is, he can hardly be said to acknowledge any allegiance to the Mogul or Soubha, some

years deigning to send to him acknowledgement, by way of Salaamy (or present) of 15,000 rupees; sometimes 20,000 ; and some years not anything at all; as he happens to be disposed."

He also gives a description of the happy people of the area and said "In this district, are the only vestiges of the beauty, purity, piety, regularity, equity and strictness of the ancient Indostan Government. Here the property as well as liberty of the people are inviolate. Here, no robberies are heard of, either private or public: In Bishnupur there were 360 pagodas or places of public worship; and the worship of cow was carried to a great extreme. The produce of the country consisted of shall timbers (a wood equal in quality to the best of Oak) dammer laccas, inferior sortment of raw silk, caposs and grain..... It is from this district that the East India Companies are supplied with the articles of shall lacca.¹²

The traditional history of the Rajas of Bishnupur prepared by the then Collector on the basis of the papers in the possession of the Raj family has

been reproduced in the District Gazetteer of Bankura by L.S.S.O Malley.

In the Bengali year 102 (in 695 A.D) a prince of one of the Royal houses of Northern India made a pilgrimage with his wife to the shrine of Jagannath in Puri. On his way in the midst of a great forest at Laugram, a village 6 miles from Kotalpur his wife was about to give birth to a child in the house of a Brahman named Panchanan. Bhagirath Guha, a Kayastha by caste was appointed to look after the child. The prince then left the place and proceeded on his way to Puri leaving her wife there. The child gradually received the education of a warrior, and when he became 15 years old, he had no equal in wrestling in all the country round. His skill in this manly art endeared him to an aboriginal ruler called the Raja of Panchamgarh, and earned for him the sobriquet of 'Adi-Malla', the original or unique wrestler.

The founder of Gishnupur Raj family was Raghunath Singh(Adi Malla). The Royal title 'Malla' which means 'wrestler' testifies to the martial spirit

of the founder-ruler. The Malla Rajas built a vast kingdom. The district which was then inhabited by aboriginal races, came under the authority of Adi-Malla, the founder king who probably belonged to Mal or Bagdi caste. But according to R.C. Dutt the ancient Rajas of Bishnupur trace back their history to a time when the Hindus were still reigning in Delhi, and the name of the muslims was unknown to India. At a later period of muslim rule, when the Mughal power extended and consolidated itself on all sides, a mughal army sometimes made its appearance near Bishnupur with claims of tribute and tribute was probably sometimes paid. The subahdars of Murshidabad also had never the firm hold over the Rajas of Bishnupur which they had over the Rajas of Burdwan and Birbhum. As the Burdwan Raj grew in power, he (Maharaj Kirtichand) attacked the Bishnupur Raj and added to his estate, large portion of his neighbour's territories. The Marathas completed the ruin of the Bishnupur House, which in course of time turned into an impoverished zamindari.¹³

The Bishnupur Rajas tried to connect themselves with the Kshatriyas of Northern India. W.W. Hunter in his "The Annals to Rural Bengal" ^{says} describes that,

"Raghunath Singh, the founder of the dynasty of Bishnupur, derives his origin from the kings of Jajnagar near Bindaban."

The story relating to the origin of the Bishnupur Raj family described by Hunter raised some controversies. R.C. Dutt rightly points out that, if one Sri Kasmetia Bagdi found a lost child in the forest, how did he know that it was the child of the queen of Jajnagar, and not of some unfortunate woman of the neighbourhood who might have better reasons for abandoning her child. Secondly, if the King of Jajnagar found it impossible to carry the new-born child with him could he not have left some part of his establishment with provision to take care of the queen and the male child until he returned from Purushottam. Thirdly, is there any evidence, beyond the signs which the learned Brahman observed on the boy's forehead and the conduct of the inspired elephant, to prove that the boy was a Kshattriya boy, and not a Bagdi boy? Lastly, is there anything to fix the date or the authenticity of the story or to show that it was not fabricated when the Rajas of Vishnupur were powerful in

western Bengal and had assumed Hindu civilisation, and were anxious, therefore, to make out a respectable royal descent for themselves. The story is well-known in all parts of India and it is a tendency of the semi-aboriginal tribes to connect themselves with the Aryan ancestors.

Such historical criticism is absolutely necessary to testify to the veracity of such legends. But According to R.C. Dutt The Rajas of Bishnupur called themselves Malls (an aboriginal title) for many centuries before they assumed the Kshattriya title of Singh. Down to the present day they are popularly known as Bagdi Rajas all over Bengal. The local facts and circumstances, however, tended to prove that the Rajas of Bishnupur are Kshattriyas, because of their long independence, ^{and their} past history and not by descent which is a legendary one. The Kshattriyas of Bishnupur can show the same letters patent for their Kshattriyahood as the Rajputs of Northern India or the Original Kshattriyas of India could show, viz; military professions and the exercise of royal powers for centuries.

W.B. Oldham who also upholds the same theory observed that, The name 'Malla' is ^{The} title of the Rajas

of Bishnupur, the acknowledged Kings of the Bagdis and of the Mals. There is an intimate connection between these two tribes viz, the Mals and Bagdis. To this day they partake of the same "hookah" and admit a common origin and in the case of Bishunupur a common sovereign. The Bagdis are, therefore, a section of the Mals who have accepted civilization and life in the cultivated country as serfs and co-religionists of the Aryans. The Mals of Bengal delta who are quite different from the Mals of the hills are either the descendants of isolated and conservative fragments of race; or of those members of it who tried to follow the example of the Bagdis, after the latter had become constituted as a recognised and exclusive caste, and therefore failed.¹⁴

"The contentions of Dutta and Oldham find further corroboration from the equally concocted legendary history of the Malles House based on genealogical papers preserved by the Bishnupur Raj family and mentioned by O'Malley in his old Bankura District Gazetteer. It is significant that this story varies materially from the Pundit's chronicle given in the Statistical Account of Burdwan and the Annals of Rural Bengal by W.W.Hunter" ¹⁵ which has already been discussed.

Raghunath Singh better known as Adi Malla became the chieftain with the favour of the Raja of Padampur (a place near the modern village and police outpost of Joypur, 8 miles from Laugram). The Raja made him a grant of Laugram and some villages in its vicinity. Adi-Malla is said to have reigned in Laugram for nearly 33 years. He was succeeded by his son Jay Malla. Jay Malla captured Padampur and by extending his dominions on all sides removed the capital to Vishnupur.

According to tradition, Adi-Malla is supposed to have founded an era called 'Mallabda' or the Malla era, the first year of which is 101 of the Bengali year. Mm.H.P.Sastri¹⁶ while commenting on Goyichandra's commentary of 'Jumaranandin's work' showed that the 1709 th year of the Saka era was the 1093 rd of the Malla era, i.e., the initial year of the Malla era is therefore $1709 - 1093 = 616$ Saka, i.e., $616 + 78 \text{ A.D.} = 694 \text{ A.D.}$ S.K.De¹⁷ while discussing about the commentary composed by Sarvananda Naga on the "Kicaca-vada-Kavya of Nitivarman, also said that Saka 1642 and Mallabda 1026 was the date of writing of the above mentioned manuscript. To him, The initial year of the Malla era would be $1642 - 1026 = 616 \text{ A.D.}$

The introduction of Mallabda, therefore, testified to their sense of chronology and splendour. Following the foot-steps of the great rulers of Ancient India, the Malla kings wanted to make some lasting impression on the history of Bengal by introducing an era which has been dedicated to their Royal title.

The fourth of the line Kalu Malla, defeated the neighbouring chief of Indas and annexed his territories. The sixth Mau Malla conquered the king of Kakatia; the seventh Jhau Malla, overcame other neighbouring princes; and the eighth, Sur Malla subdued the Raja of Bogri (Now a pargana in the north of Midnapur). L.S.S.O. Malley, in his Bengal District Gazetteer of Bankura, mentions the achievements of these powerful kings of Mallabhum. "A long list of 40 kings then follows, but their reigns are barren in interest." Chronicles merely recorded the names of the chieftains.

The 49th raja of this dynasty was Dhar Hambir. According to L.S.S.O. Malley Dhar Hambir flourished in the year 993 B.S. or 1586 ~~B.S.~~^{A.D.} corresponding

to the 31st year of the reign of Akbar, the great.¹⁸
For the first time this Raja paid an annual tribute
of Rs.107,000 recognising the suzerainty of the muslim
Viceroys of Bengal.

THE EARLY ACCOUNTS OF THE MALLA RULERS:

The tussle between the Mughals and the
Malla rajas of Vishnupur, which was a constant factor
became prevelant during the reign of Dhar Hambir. The
Raja became involved in the struggle between the Mughals
and the Afghans. The Afghans commanded by Kutlu Khan,
extended their dominion over Midnapore and Bishnupur,
leaving the river Damodar as the barrier between them
and the Mughals(1582). The Mughal General Khan Azam
was, however, partly successful in subdueing Qutlu
Khan Lohani(the Afghan ruler of north Orissa). In
1590, when Mansingh, the Mughal Governor of Bihar,
invaded Orissa, Qutlu Khan sent a large army to the
fort of Raipur¹⁹ (situated some 50 miles west of
Jahanabad which was probably the same as Raipur in the
modern district of Bankura). He himself then started
to meet the Mughual army. Man Singh's son Jagat Singh

was placed in charge of the advance guard of the Mughal forces. During the armed conflict, the Afghans made a night attack on the Mughal camp. Jagat Singh was wounded but was saved from capture by the Malla king Dhar Hambir, who gave him asylum in the Bishnupur fort. Shortly after this event Qutlu Khan died. The Afghans for the time being came to terms with the Mughals. Raja Dhar Hambir remained loyal to the Mughals.²⁰ The next king of the line was Bir Hambir (According to the Pandit's chronicle 48th king and 50th king according to the family chronicle)

In 1608 ~~A.D.~~ Islam Khan, Jehangir's Subahdar of Bengal, sent a force under Sheikh Kamal to conquer Birbhum, Pachet, Hijli and to reduce Bir Hambir. Bir Hambir recognised the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor without a fight and helped the Mughal army in its march against the Zamindar of Birbhum, Shams Khan and against the then incumbent to Hijli's Masnad-i-Ala Salim Khan.²¹ 'Baharistan' gives the names of three Kingdoms and three 'Zamindars' but explicitly associates only Salim Khan with Hijli and leaves the association of other 'two'

'Zamindars' with two other 'Kingdoms' entirely to the imagination of the reader. But Bir Hambir, so far as can be ascertained, was the king of Vishnupur, which place, fails to find any mention in Mirza Nathan's account, making it more enigmatic. Sir Jadunath Sarkar²² associates Bir Hambir with the Zamindary of Birbhum - an association, however, not supported by any historical record.

Moreover, Birbhum until the arrival of the British, was ruled by an Afghan House. There is, however, reason to believe that Bir Hambir was the ruler of Panchet at the time of Sheikh Kamal's expedition, while Bir Hambir's territories probably included Panchakot or Shikarbhumi (Always referred to by the muslim chroniclers and even by the early British administrators as Panchet, in Purulia District in West Bengal). A vivid description of the fort of Panchakot has been given by H. Coupland. The reasons for its abandonment is not known. Some documents of later ages, belonging to the Malla family, preserved in the record room of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Vishnupur Branch,

testify to the fact that, the territories of the Malla Kings extended from the Selayee or the Silabati in the south to the border of Birbhum in the north, minus the territories belonging to the Burdwan Raj and from the borders of Mandaran in the east to Panchakot in the west. This might be highly exaggerated, but we cannot deny the fact that from the reign of Dhar Hambir, the expansion of Malla Kingdom began distinctly; and during the reign of Bir Singh II, territorial expansion of their kingdom reached its zenith.

Tradition says that, Bir Hambir before his conversion to Vaishnavism, was a cruel ruler. Two significant Vaishnava works, the Premavilasa of Nityananda Das (alias Balaram Das) and the Bhaktiratnakara of Narahari Chakravarti described that Srinivasa and other devotees left Brindaban for Gauda with a number of valuable Vaishnava manuscripts. On the way two cart-loads of these rare manuscripts were plundered by Bir Hambir. So, the Vaishnava writer Narahari Chakravarti depicts Bir Hambir as "the most wicked king in India" and laments the fact that "there is none to punish this sinner".²³

The news of the ^ol_Ating gave a death blow to the old and infirm Krishnadas Kaviraj, author of the "Chaitanya-Charitamrita", who being unable to bear the shock breathed his last. It was Shrinivas Acharya who successfully converted the "wicked king" Bir Hambir to Vaishnavism. The personal influence of Shrinivasa and the reading of the 'Bhagabata' by him, so moved the king, that he not only embraced Vaishnavism but also gave his preceptor or Guru rich endowments of land and money. After embracing new faith, Bir Hambir became a changed man and used to spend the major portion of his time in performing Vaishnava rites in the temple of Shri Radharaman on the bank of the Kalindi Tank. He introduced the worship of Madan Mohan and Kalachand in his capital city and erected a grand Ras-Mancha, where all the deities of Bishnupur ^{were} used to be exhibited during the annual 'Ras festival'. All these legendary records and traditions, though exaggerated to some extent, make it clear that Bir Hambir embraced the new faith viz, Vaishnavism, but it can not be definitely said whether personal likings of the king or the influence of Shrinivasa Acharya prompted him to accept Vaishnavism. From all these

references, it would appear that the reign of Bir Hambir fell between 1591 and 1616 ~~A.D.~~

There is confusion regarding the succession of the Malla prince to the throne after Bir Hambir. It had been maintained from the inscriptional evidences that Bir Hambir was succeeded by Raghunath Singh. Bir Singh I as the eldest son of Bir Hambir probably preceded Raghunath Singh I on the Malla throne. But some scholars named Raghunath Singh I as the successor of Bir Hambir who occupied the Malla throne from 1616 to 1656 ~~A.D.~~ Raghunath assumed the Kshattriya title of "Singh" which had acquired an honorific significance. It is said that, Raghunath's courage and valour pleased the Bengal subedar, who remitted his arrears of tribute and conferred on him the title of "Sing". He erected beautiful temples and tried his best to make his capital city "more beautiful than the House of Indra in Heaven." Sanskrit learning which had been gaining ground since the days of Bir Hambir received further patronage of this enlightened monarch.

He was succeeded by Bir Singh II, who built the present fort of Vishnupur. He excavated eight big tanks or lakes. It not only relieved the chronic shortage of water in Vishnupur but also formed a part of its fortifications. His architectural creations included Lalji temple (one of the finest ek-ratna laterite temples in Vishnupur which was erected in 1658 A.D.) a Sikhara temple (At Bikrampur in Onda P.S.) two Chala temples at Tejpal, (a suburb of Vishnupur) and Sabrakon (in Tal danga P.S.) temple. These temples were built by him in 1659, 1671 and 1676 respectively. The Madangopal and Muralimohan temples at Vishnupur both built in 1665 are attributed, according to the respective inscriptions on them, to the queens of Bir Singh II. named Shiromani and Chudamani. An able Administrator as he was, Bir Singh II defeated Moniram Adhurya of Maliara, who was oppressing his people. Epigraphic record makes it clear that the reign of Bir Singh II fell approximately between 1656 and 1677.

The next king of this line was Durjan Singh. His reign extended from 1678 to 1694. He built

the Madanmohan temple in Vishnupur which is remarkable for its terracotta sculpture. Durjan Singh was succeeded by Raghunath Singh II, who apparently ruled his kingdom from 1694 to 1730. This raja was a great patron of music. Through his encouragement the 'Vishnupur school of Indian classical music' reached its finest phase of development. His martial spirit was marvellously exhibited when he defeated Sova Singh of Chetoabarda, a pargana in the district of Midnapore. Traditions say that, from there he procured Lal Bai, a muslim girl, with whom he fell in love. If popular legends are to be believed, it may be said that, his extreme infatuation for this muslim girl led to court conspiracies culminating in his eventual downfall. From the time of Raghunath Singh II, the decline of the Malla power started. The causes of their gradual decline are not far to seek. Succession of inefficient rulers, internal quarrels, too much influence of Vaishnavism, infrequent plunders of the Maratha bargirs (marathas) in the Malla territories, famine of 1770, the rise of the big neighbouring Zamindars like the Burdwan Raj were the causes, chiefly attributed to the decline of this immemorable dynasty.

Gopal Singh ruled Mallabhum between 1720-1745. He was a pious Vaishnava and lacked the essential qualities of a good administrator. Three temples to the south west of Lal bandh, known by the joint name of Jor-Mandir were constructed by him around 1726 ~~A.D.~~. It can not be said beyond doubt whether Krishna Singh, the son of Gopal Singh ever occupied the Malla throne or not. The name of Krishna Singh is noticed from two inscriptions, one in his own name on the Radha Gobinda temple at Vishnupur (1729 ~~A.D.~~) and the other on the Radha Madhab temple at the same place built in 1737 by his queen. It is possible that these temples were constructed during the reign of his father Gopal Singh when Krishna Singh was the crown-prince. Raja Chaitanya Singh's accession to the Malla throne is *also* quite uncertain. On the basis of epigraphic evidences, it may be said that the Radha Shyam temple was built up by him in 1758. So from that year at least, he continued to be the king of Mallabhum till the Mallabhum estates were publicly auctioned in 1806 for arrears of revenue.

MARATHA INVASIONS AND EFFECTS OF MARATHA FRONTIER
INCURSIONS

Apart from the Mughal invasions, ravages in the Vishnupur territory by the Maratha raiders in the forty's and fifty's of the 18th century caused a break down of administrative system, and a veritable insolvency enveloped the country in all respects.

Alivardi became the ruler of Bengal in 1740 when Orissa was a part of the Bengal subah. The Maratha army entered Bengal through Birbhum and Vishnupur. Their intention was to collect chauth or 1/4th of the Imperial revenues which had been assigned to them by the Mughal Emperor Akbar. In Bengal the main fight against the Marathas took place, at first, in the district of Burdwan. The troops of Nawab Alivardi resisted the Marathas led by Bhaskar Pandit. Bhaskar fled to Panchet and his detachments scattered in Burdwan, Hugli, Hijli and other places also took to their heels.

The Council in Calcutta, wrote to the Court of Directors on the 30th October, 1742 A.D.

"The Nabob near his capital being joined with the forces from Patna and other parts advanced to Cuttua, the Morattoes retreating before him when a battle ensued, the victory fell to the Nabob who drove them into the Panchet country but with little or no loss on either side. There are since retired to Ramgur, the party of them at Hughley and Janna have since quitted those places." The Marathas took their shelter in the dense Jungles of Panchet. Instructed by Mir Habib, Bhaskar Pandit left Panchet, invaded Vishnupur, and then advancing by way of Chandrakona reached the Midnapore district where he encamped at Naraingarh and burnt and plundered Radhanagar and other towns.

Bhaskar sent his army also to Orissa where Alivardi's deputy governor Shaikh Masum, tried to oppose it but was defeated and lost his life at Jaypur. On hearing the tragic news, Alivardi left Panchet and advanced through Burdwan to Midnapore. A pitched battle between the nawab and the Marathas led by Bhaskar Pandit took place near Midnapore. The Marathas were defeated. They were hotly pursued and driven beyond the Chilka by the nawab's army in 1742.²⁴

The battle with the Maratha raiders continued for nine long years, centering round the districts of Bankura, Burdwan and Midnapore.

The Bargirs ravaged mostly the less protected parts of the country. Riyaz-us-Salatin mentions that, "Sacking the villages and towns of the surrounding tracts and engaging in slaughter and captures, they set fire to granaries and spared no vestige of fertility. And when the stores and granaries of Burdwan were exhausted and the supply of imported grains were also completely cut off; to avert death by starvation, human beings ate plantain roots, whilst animals were fed on the leaves of trees. Even these gradually ceased to be available. For breakfast and supper, nothing except the disc of the sun and the moon feasted their eyes. The whole tract from Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) to Midnapore and Jaleswar came into the possession of the Marathas. Those murderous free-booters drowned in the rivers a large number of the people after cutting off their ears, noses and hands. Tying sacks of dirt to the mouth of others, they mangled and burnt them with indescribable tortures."

Such inhuman torture, indiscriminate loot and plunder committed by the Bargirs (Marathas) marked a reign of terror in the minds of the common people of villages and towns in Bengal. Apart from the loss of life and property the economic disintegration of the country-side became complete.

The effect of the Maratha invasions, has been described by William Hunter in his "Statistical Accounts of Burdwan". Marathas fell with the heaviest weight upon the border principalities of Birbhum and Bishnupur. Such raids reduced the once powerful frontier houses to poverty and their tenantry fled from a country in which the peasant had become a mere machine for growing food for the soldier. The Marathas spent their energy in plundering the frontier tracts of Birbhum and Bishnupur by means of small parties.

The decaying Malla power of Bishnupur suffered much from the invasions of the Maraths, who laid waste their country. An interesting side-light on the Maratha raid of 1742 under Bhaskar Rao is to be found in a recent publication.²⁶ Malla Raj Gopal Singh

who reigned from 1730 to 1745, was a pious Vaishnava. He issued an edict that all the people of Mallabhum should count their beads and repeat the name of God (Harinam) every evening at Sunset; this evening prayer is still known as "Gopal Singher begar". During his reign in 1742, when the marathas under Bhaskar Ram appeared before the southern gate of Bishnupur, Gopal

Singh made good his escape. He took shelter inside

~~/ to pray to Madan Mohan. The fervent appeals to pray to Madan Mohan~~
The fort and ordered both soldiers and citizens ~~of his~~ ^{the fervent}
^{appeal of his} devotees moved Madan Mohan, who, himself, took charge

to defend the city. A local legend relates that, two big cannons were fired without human assistance by the Lord Madan Mohan. One of these cannons is still preserved at Bishnupur and is ^{known} ~~known~~ by the name of "Dalmardan" (Slayer of the invading hordes) or, more popularly, "Dalmadal". "The truth probably is that Maratha cavalry were unable to pierce the strong fortifications and retired, leaving Raja's levies to plunder their abandoned camp."

In 1751, Alivardi Khan assigned to the Marathas the surplus revenues of Orissa²⁷ and parts of The Present Midnapore district and agreed to pay Rs. 12 lakhs

as Chauth to Raghuji Bhonsle on condition that the Marathas would not attack the dominions of Alivadi.²⁸

In 1760 (March) a large maratha force invaded Midnapore and neighbourhood of Burdwan.²⁹ Shew Bhutt, the maratha chief made himself temporarily the master of parts of the district of Midnapore and rushed troops to Khirpai, and Bishnupur and Burdwan. These manoeuvres caused considerable alarm at Murshidabad and Calcutta. The English, the nawab and the Emperor jointly tried to attack the maratha army. For lack of co-operation from Mir Jafar the English could not cross the Damodar river and engage the Emperor's army who were waiting 7 or 8 miles on the other side of the river. So, the Emperor withdrew his troops, set fire to his camp and retired with his maratha allies to Bishnupur. The Emperor then recrossed the Damodar and retreated towards Patna.

At that time Chaitanya Singh was the Raja of Mallabhum. A pious king as he was, he spent most of his time in religious activities. His favourite minister Kamal Biswas took this advantage and became

-57-

The Country.

the de facto ruler of Vishnupur. Damodar Singh, a cousin of the Raja, taking advantage of the situation, tried to overthrow Chaitanya Singh. He went to the Court of Murshidabad and succeeded in obtaining a large force from Sairaj-ud-daulah. This force was defeated at Sanghatgola, north of Vishnupur. Damodar Singh narrowly escaped with his life. Again he tried to get help from the new nawab Mir Jafar. Mir Jafar helped him with a stronger force. This time Damodar Singh became victorious and captured the fort of Vishnupur. Chaitanya Singh escaped with the family idol of Madan Mohan, and wandered from place to place till he reached Calcutta, where, it is said, he pawned the idol to Gokul Mitra of Baghbazar in order to procure the aid of Diwan Ganga Gobinda Singh through whose intercession he was reinstated by the British.³⁰

THE NATURE OF REVENUE ADMINISTRATION OF MALLABHUM BEFORE 1751.

The Malla rulers of Bishnupur held undisputed sway over their territories till the conquest of Bengal by Akbar in 1574-76. Hambir, the 49th king of the line, acknowledged the suzerainty of the Emperor

-58-

of Delhi by paying him an annual tribute of Rs. 1,07,000. Apart from this, the position of the Bishnupur Rajas, as hereditary local chieftains, was not otherwise ~~disturbed~~ ^{disturbed}. During the viceroyalty of Murshid Quli Khan the raja of Bishnupur retained his quasi-independent status but lost the status of a subordinate chieftain as his lands were settled afresh with him on a Zamindari tenure. Instead of paying annual peskash the raja of Bishnupur had to pay land revenue like other estates. This change in the nature of the right in the land under the Bishnupur Raj took place during the reign of Gopal Singh (1730-1745 A.D) ³¹

Murshid Quli Khan, as the Dewan and then the subahdar of Bengal adopted certain measures for the improvement of revenue collection.

According to the Riyaz - us-Salatin, the Zemindars of Birbhum and Bishunupur being protected by dense forests, mountains and hills did not have to appear personally before the Dewan or the subahdar, but deputed instead, their agents to carry on transactions on their behalf and used to pay, through them, the usual tributes and presents.

-59-

The system followed during the Afghan and the Mughal regimes for collection and administration of land taxes in Bengal as also the places occupied in that system by the local chieftains whose territories now comprise the modern district of Bankura, are subjects worthy of a discussion. But the information available on these points are neither adequate nor satisfactory. E.A. Gait, in the census Report of Bengal of 1901 observed that, During Muhammadan rule, the authority of the central Government varied with the character of the king or the Governor(in Bengal). If he was energetic and masterful, the whole province accepted his authority, but ^{if} ~~he~~ was weak and indolent the local rulers became practically independent. The Rajas of Bishnupur in Bankura, or Mallabhum, as it was then called were practically independent so long as they paid the revenue assessed on their estates.³²

-60-
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 "Puskaranadhipati" clearly testifies to the fact that Chandravarmana son of Simhavarmana was the king of a place called "Puskarana". The problem of identification of Puskarana is a difficult one. But K.N. Dikshit of the Archaeological Survey of India suggested that (which has been generally accepted by scholars) "At a distance of less than 25 miles to the north east of Susunia is an ancient village named Pokhran (The name of the place is now locally pronounced as Pakhrana) on the south bank of the river Damodar. It is very likely that the place dates back from the early Gupta period and can thus be considered to be the Pushkarana of the

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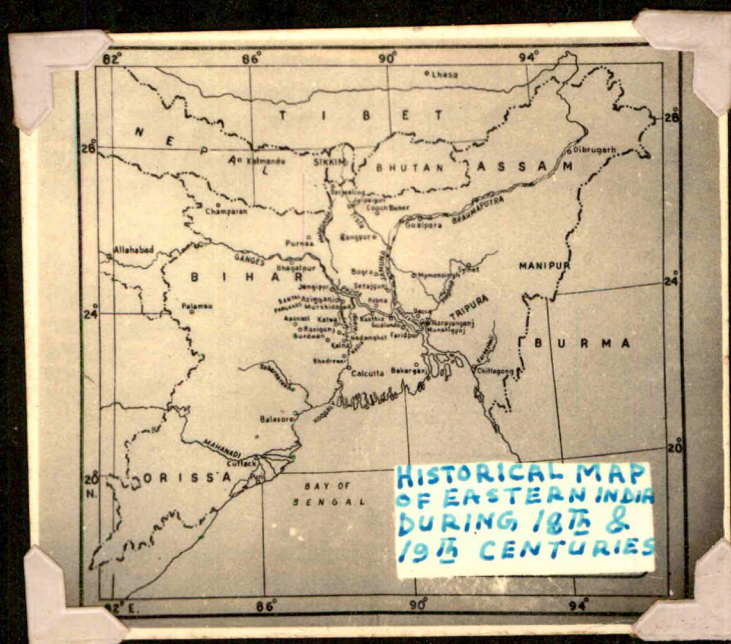
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-65-

the admiration of experts in Hindu art. A host of men were employed in the service of this Deity,- worshippers to perform the daily service, florists to supply flowers and to string garlands, priests to recite the sacred books, songsters to sing hymns and other men and women too numerous to mention - The National Magazine, October, 1960, P 393.

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HISTORICAL MAP
OF EASTERN INDIA
DURING 18TH &
19TH CENTURIES

CHAPTER -II

RELATIONS OF THE RAJAS OF BISHNUPUR
WITH THE EAST INDIA COMPANY (1760- 1833)

In 1751 Alivardi made peace with Raghuji Bhonsle, ceded the revenues of Orissa to the Marathas and agreed to pay the Chauth of Bengal.

The year 1757, considered as the year of commencement of the British-raj in Bengal, may be considered as the year of commencement of revenue experiments in Bishnupur. In the formative phase of the British administration from 1760 to 1805 experimental measures were undertaken by the East India Company in the field of administration and revenue experiments were introduced in the jungle Mahals including the Bishnupur estate.

-67-

I

Administration from 1760-1793 A.D:-

The lands of the Rajas of Bishnupur came under the control of the English East India Company with the acquisition of Diwani in 1765. James Grant in his "Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal" enclosed a list of the districts which formed the Diwani portion of Bengal, in which 'Vishnupur' figures as a district.

According to James Grant Vishnupur and Panchet should have come under the control of the Company in 1760 when Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong were ceded to it, but actually that did not take place on account of a fraud allegedly practised on the Company. His opinion is probably based on the point that Bishnupur and Panchet were within the Chakla of Burdwan at that time and should have been transferred to the Company when Burdwan was ceded. Grant's conclusion can not be accepted, as it is based on incorrect data. According to Firminger, the Sanad granted by Mir Qasim Khan for the ^Scession of Burdwan to the Company ran thus in the

Official translation: "To the Zamindars, Canoongoes, Talookdars, Tenants, Husbandmen, and Chief villagers of the Pergunnah of Burdwan etc., the Zemindaree of the Raja Tilluck Chand, in the districts of the Subah of Bengal etc." ¹ Actually the Zamindari of the Raja of Burdwan and not the Chakla of Burdwan was meant to be ceded. Gishnupur and Panchet were, therefore, withheld from the Company in 1760.

A. Subjugation of Semi-independent Chiefs:

On 30th January, 1767, John Graham, the Resident at Midnapore, wrote a letter to Ensign John Fergusson in which he ^{referred to} stated the powerful and a very large tract of country lying westward of Midnapore. With a view to bring these independent Zamindars to obedience and to reduce them to a proper subjection to the Company's Government on payment of a just revenue, John Graham directed Ensign Fergusson to carry arms against them. ²

Ensign Fergusson, accordingly started with a detachment to carry land settlement and reduce the Zamindars of those parts to submission. ³ Fergusson

assisted by the landlords of Dharanda and Karnagar marched forward with his troops. The Zamindar of Jhargram (in Midnapore) was first to be defeated by the Company's troops. From Jhargram Fergusson proceeded to the Police station of Balarampur. From there he communicated with the local Zamindars of Supur and Ambikanagar in the modern district of Bankura.

In a letter, dated 14th February, 1767, Fergusson informed John Graham of the sums for which he (Fergusson) had settled the parganas of Ramgarh, Jambani, Sankhacoolia, Jatbunia and Jhargram. At this juncture the internal quarrel between Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh of the Bishnupur Raj family reached its zenith. Damodar had already taken possession of some of the villages near Ambikanagar. Fergusson sent some sepoy to Ambikanagar in search for Damodar Singh. But the Zamindar of that pargana fled away and took shelter in the neighbouring jungles making it impossible for Fergusson to contact him.

-70-

The Zamindars of Raipur and Phulkusma whose estates lay within the Burdwan district had avoided making their submission and paying an equitable rent at Burdwan. As directed by John Graham, Fergusson tried to reduce these Zamindars (the Zamindars of Raipur and Phulkusma) and to make an agreement with them for the payment of a fixed annual revenue. These landlords, however, successfully proved with the help of documents signed by Goodwin, the Company's official at Burdwan, that their territories belonged to the Subah of Bengal and not Orissa. They along with the Zamindar of Simlapal were thus allowed to pay their revenues at Burdwan through the Zamindar of Bogri Pargana.

The Chhatna Raj also virtually lost its independent status through the same levelling activities of the Company.⁴

It would thus appear that even as late as 1767 there were lands to the west of Midnapore district which had been ceded to the East India Company in 1760, but were not subject to the control of the Resident at Midnapore. There was also a confusion so far as the respective territorial jurisdiction of the Residents at

-71-

Midnapore and Murshidabad are concerned, though the Resident at Murshidabad was placed in supervisory charge of all the Diwani lands. Fergusson was able to integrate the Zamindars of Supur, Ambikanagar and Chhatna, all within the modern district of Bankura, into the Chakla of Midnapur, but the lands of the Raja of Bishnupur were apparently not included in this Chakla at that time.

B. Bishnupur from 1765-1770:

In 1765 when the Bishnupur estates came under the control of the Company with its acquisition of the Diwani, arrangements were made accordingly for the collection of land revenue. So far as Diwani portion was concerned, Muhammad Reza Khan was entrusted with the power of supervising the revenue collection.⁵ His actions were supervised and controlled by the Resident at Murshidabad. It is evident from a statement (dated 10th April, 1770), which was forwarded by Richard Becher, Resident at Murshidabad, that a man Gulam Mustapa by name was acting as the amil or Collector of revenues in respect of Bishnupur for the Bengali year 1176, corresponding to the period from the 11th April, 1769 to the 10th

April, 1770. In that year the net revenue payable to the Government treasury in respect of the lands of the Raja of Bishnupur amounted to Sicca Rs. 240,851. From 11th April, 1770 to 10th April, 1771 the net revenue was enhanced by Sicca Rs. 30,000 making the total net revenue to be realised in that year to Sicca Rs. 280,501 inspite of the devastating effect of the great famine of 1769-1770.⁶

The grant of Diwani to the East India Company marked a change in the very spirit of administration. The existence of Naib Diwan fully depended on his capacity to collect as much as he could. The Indian Collector of revenue or the ~~Amils~~ became important than the Zamindars. In many of the districts they agreed to pay a fixed sum, but the highest bidder was always preferred. In truth, they became farmers of revenue. Throwing aside the future welfare of the country, the Company tried its best for the maximisation of land revenue. The amils were entrusted with the power of selecting those who worked under them. They had not enjoyed such privileges in the days of Murshid Quli Khan or his immediate successors. The Choudhuris were

no longer there as subordinate collectors of revenue.⁷

Becher, the Resident at the Durbar wrote to the President and Council:-

"On this destructive plan and with a continued demand for more revenue have the collections been made ever since the English have been in possession of the Diwani".⁸

The Resident ^{at} ~~of~~ the Durbar, however, insisted on the Naib Diwan's sending to all the principal districts as subordinate collectors of revenue such persons as were recommended by him. Instead of being sub-farmers under the amils they would serve as checks. They would collect copies of all accounts and they were to correspond with the Resident.⁹ Such arrangement was calculated to ensure the collection of as large sums from the country as it could yield. "All concerned were interested in gaining credit by an increase of revenue during the time of their being in station without sufficiently attending to what future consequences might be expected." ¹⁰

From 1765 to 1772 there was double Government, the East India Company being in charge of the Diwani, the nominal Nawab assisted by Muhammad Reza Khan, a nominee of the British as the Naib Nazim, being in charge of the Nizamat. The Nawab was deprived of the right to maintain an army. He had to pay the annual sum of Sicca Rupees 5,36,131 for the support of the Nizamat. Of this sum Rs.36,07,277 was to be allotted for the maintenance of troops and this expenditure was also controlled by the British. The supervision of the administration of criminal justice and Police was placed in the hands of Md.Reza Khan, the Naib Nazim. Md.Reza Khan as Naib Diwan of Bengal was placed under the supervision of the Resident at the Durbar. There had been Residents at the Durbar before the grant of the Diwani. But the post became 'practically a new one' from 1765. Francis Sykes, Resident at the Durbar from 1765-1767- superintended the collection and disposal of revenues under the inspection and control of the Select Committee at Calcutta. He had to forward all correspondence with the natives to the President and Council at Calcutta to be transmitted to the Court of Directors.

-75-

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He had also right to inspect the Courts of Justice at Murshidabad.¹¹ Clive's idea of Double Government was that the East India Company should be the "spring which concealed under the shadow of the Nabob's name secretly gives motion to this vast machine of Government without offering violence to the original constitution".¹²

Verelst as the successor of Clive appointed junior servants of the Company as supervisors of Revenue in 1769 in the principal districts of the Diwani portion of Bengal. Recall of Amils was the next step. The supervisors were entrusted with the duties to collect a summary history of the districts in charge of them. "Each of them was to make a study of the existing revenue-roll and bring his investigation home to the Zamindar. The supervisors were to procure a list of the patta¹³ as distributed to every ryot and take cognisance of the demands made on the ryots. They were to regulate commerce of the respective districts entrusted to their charge and to enforce justice". They were placed under the Resident at the Durbar.

"You will be his (Ryots) refuge and the redeemer of his wrongs" - such instructions of Verelst to the Supervisors, though based on noble ideals, proved ridiculous in practice. He (Verelst) allowed them to carry on private trade. But they were not conspicuous for "integrity, disinterestedness, assiduity and watchfulness, qualities which, according to Verelst were very unnecessary in these new administration".¹⁴ The supervisors soon monopolised the inland trade of the districts. For their own interest, they exploited their privileged position in such a manner that the system of supervisorship became completely discredited in 1770.

British hesitation to assume formal sovereignty was perhaps responsible for various developments that confused the issue in the seventies of the 18th century. The first phase of British administration terminating in the great famine of the early 70's may thus be regarded as the period of expansion and hesitation.

C. Famine of 1769-70:

The famine of 1770 was an "appalling spectre on the threshold of British rule in Bengal." We may compare this famine in Bengal to the famine of 1630-31, in Gujarat which had turned that 'garden of the world' into a wilderness.' In the Mid-eighteenth century the net result of the military operations successively by the Nawab's troops, bargirs (Marathas) and the Company's battalions, accompanied by economic drain and natural calamity, was to make the forest and salt tracts, a land of poverty and famine. Successive failure of crops from 1768 due to inadequate rainfall and gradual rise in the price of crop turned the situation to the worse. According to Md. Reza Khan, "Hitherto grain was scarce but this year it can not be found at all". The President and Council at Calcutta reported that, "There is the greatest possibility that this distress will increase and a certainty that it can not be alleviated for six months to come." ¹⁵ Early in 1769 high prices gave an indication of the approaching famine. "The intensity of such famines and the loss of lives caused by them are largely due to the chronic poverty of the people". ¹⁶

On the 24th ²² ~~December~~ 1769 verelst laid down his office and he was succeeded by Cartier. Both of them did not gave any ^{idea} ~~idea~~ to their masters of the true nature of the impending famine. In 1770, Cartier wrote that only one district was suffering so severely that some slight remission of the land tax would have to be made.¹⁷

The normal price of coarse rice prior to the famine of 1770 used to vary from 5 to 6 annas per maund. But in June 1770 the selling price of rice rose to 6 to 7 seers per rupee.¹⁸ According to the Report of the Resident at the Durbar, "within thirty miles round the city of Murshidabad rice sold at only three seers per rupee".¹⁹

In a letter to Richard Becher, Resident at the Durbar dated 28th May 1770, Charles Stuart, supervisor of Birbhum gave a picture of the severity of season and the miserable state of the province. But he stated that the ryots of the province had not been backward in the payments of revenue. He also informed the Resident that the collector of Bishnupur had left the station without carrying with him the money

that was in the treasury.²⁰

In another letter to Richard Becher dated 4th July, 1770, Charles Stuart observed that, "with regard to the province of Bissinpoor in place of any danger of the revenue falling short I have acquainted you that it would only to be regulated and the collections to be fairly accounted for to yield the company a considerable increase". He also hinted at the malpractices generally adopted by the amils and particularly pointed out the misconduct of the Amils of Bishnupur. Charles Stuart informed the Resident that with regard to Bishnupur a new settlement might in the meantime taken place upon the same terms of last year as a result of which the company lost a considerable increase of revenue.²¹

In reply Richard Becher wrote that, "As to what relates to the ^{ssi}Bishnupoor accounts I shall only say that the charges comparatively taken with those of other districts appear to me moderate and the sum collected not more than might be expected".²²

The severity of the famine of 1770 in Bishnupur resulted in the scarcity of food and drinking water alongwith the outbreak of small-~~pox~~ and other diseases which destroyed thousands of lives and impoverished whole families. In certain places the living fed on the dead.

The native superintendent of Bishnupur at a later period wrote that "The fields of rice ~~are~~ have become like fields of dried straw".²³

Effects of the Great Famine:-

The famine of 1770 had several important effects in the socio-economic frame work of Bishnupur. It resulted in the extinction of 1/3rd of the total population.²⁴ For two generations at ^{least} ~~least~~ the Bishnupur estates and the other parts of Bengal remained under-populated. The depopulation became so evident that the Government wrote to the Court of Directors about the number of industrious peasants and manufacturers destroyed by the famine.²⁵ "The people suffered intensely."

The relief measures were too scanty to cope with the situation. It is not possible to quote exact figure to show how the famine had affected different classes of people, but it is certain that the artisan class and the agricultural community in Bishnupur and neighbouring areas had greatly impoverished. Many of the old Zamindars (2/3rd of old aristocracy according to Hunter) or hereditary farmers of revenue were ruined due to their inability to collect regular rent from the impoverished Peasantry. Large scale extinction of agricultural population and skilled workmen caused a steady decline in the Company's profits.

A letter from the president and council to the Court of Directors, dated 12th February 1771, clearly states that there has been "such a mortality and desertion among the ryots as to deprive the (revenue) farmers to the possibility of receiving the rents in arrear". In another letter of the same date, they spoke of the "great reduction of people".²⁶ Most of the Zamindars were in 1770 not in a position to advance takavi loans to the ryots. According to

Hastings famine was aggravated due to the "want of a principle of Government, adequate to the substance of responsibility and for this the Court of Directors to be blamed".²⁷ Such a massacre did not in any way influence the collection of land revenue. It remained more or less static. Such uniform collection of revenue was maintained by imposing additional burden viz, najai cess on the living persons.

In the meantime the Company's servants amassed huge profits by creating new openings for themselves. They not only monopolised the grain in order to make high profits but they compelled the cultivators to sell even the requisite seed. The Court of Directors apprehending the serious nature of the wide spread havoc caused by the famine asked for full reports²⁸ and urged to inflict exemplary punishment²⁹ on those who dared to counteract the benevolence of the Company and entertain a thought of profiting by the universal distress.³⁰ Richard Becher and Md. Reza Khan complained that a monopoly of rice was being carried on by the

Gomasthas of Englishmen. But the complaint was never properly investigated.

Apart from the growing sense of immorality among the Company's servants, the famine of 1770 gave rise to a condition of anarchy in the countryside. The depredations of the dacoits increased steadily. The local police system in many cases, failed to ~~take~~^{tackle} the situation. The landless class began to plunder the newly assessed ryots occupying lands at a cheap rate.

"The famine thus effected the system of land tenure and led to the consequent emergence of a sense of insecurity in a changing economy"³¹ Such condition of anarchy became wide-spread because of another reason viz, "cruel severity" followed in the matter of revenue collection. The supervisors and amils competed with each other to ensure its collection. The wide-spread famine of 1770 resulted in an urgent gearing up of the administration. The amils were withdrawn towards the end of 1770 and a supervisor was placed in charge of the three districts of Birbhum, Bishnupur and Panchet. The Resident at the Durbar

wrote to one of the supervisors "It is possible Sir, you should be so infatuated as to believe the present misery and distress of the country arises solely or in the greatest measure from the oppression of the amils. That they had done mischief I do not deny but the greatest cause of the decline of the country has proceeded from such large sums being required from the districts".³²

In such an alarming situation five percent of the land revenue was only remitted in 1770 and 10 percent added in the year following.³³ Another effect of the famine was that the old habitual dependence on qanungo records disappeared almost completely. The devastation and depopulation caused by the famine made old papers much less valuable. This added to the difficulty of revenue assessment, and hastened the decision on the part of the Company to "stand forth as Diwan" and to introduce the five years farming system on an experimental basis.

D. The New Farming system (1772-1777)
and Administrative changes introduced
up to 1780:-

The famine of 1770 resulted in the extinction of one-third of the total population. One third of the land turned into jungles. Comptrolling Councils of Revenue were formed at Murshidabad and Patna in July 1770, the Resident to the Durbar becoming the President of the Controlling Councils of Revenue of Murshidabad. Besides Resident there were three other members. Comptrolling Council of Revenue was also formed at Calcutta in 1771 replacing the Select Committee there. This new body served to control revenue matters only. By the instruction of the Court of Directors (which was received in Calcutta on 14th April, 1772) the Company's servants were asked to take upon themselves "the entire care and management of the revenues". As instructed by the Court of Directors Warren Hastings removed Naib Diwan Md. Reza Khan from Murshidabad and Shitab Roy from Patna. The Comptrolling Council of Revenue at Murshidabad came to an end. The supervisors became known as Collectors. The Khalsa was removed to Calcutta. A new Revenue Board was established at

Calcutta consisting of the whole Council in October 1772.

In 1773, the Collectors were removed and five provincial councils were set up in Bengal-at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Burdwan, Dinajpur and Dacca. These Councils were composed of five members each, a chief and four senior servants of the Company with a native Dewan to help the council. Native amils in the Districts, however, reappeared for a few years but they were placed under the provincial councils merely as gomastahs or agents.

On ^{May,} May 11th, 1772, the Company stood forth as the Diwan. The period of hesitation in the land revenue system gave way to a period of centralisation in 1772. Warren Hastings embarked on Five-year farming on the basis of accumulating increase (russad). The Company decided to let out the lands to revenue farmers for a period of five years. English collectors were appointed for each district to be supervised by the Board of Revenue in Calcutta. The districts of **G**ishnupur, Panchet and Birbhum were included within the jurisdiction of the provincial Council at Burdwan.³⁴

The Zamindari system now gave place to this new farming system. This system gave rise to a new class of izaradars or farmers bidding higher than the zamindars. They were chiefly composed of Calcutta banians who were eager to invest money in profitable farming. By introducing such system the Company wanted to determine the exact owner of the soil and to establish direct relation with the original producers by eliminating intermediaries. The problems, however, remained unsolved and the old decaying system could not be replaced by new arrangements on a sound basis. The year from 1772-77, resulting in the emergence of new farming system may be regarded as the period of experiments in the field of revenue administration. The farming system was nothing but a stop-gap arrangement to reach a solution of the problems still unsolved. The farmers were not recognised as the owners of the soil, they were regarded as mere tax-collectors. New adventurers in order to gain a temporary profit, made high offers in the public auction, subjected the cultivators to every kind of exaction, but defaulted in paying promised revenue. Land thus became a

"commodity to be marketed and mortgaged"³⁵ Over-assessment was the most noticeable feature of the Five-year settlement and at the end of five years, remissions and balances amounted to two crores and twenty lakhs.³⁶ There was agitation all around for a new settlement which would not press upon the farmers. The settlements of Bishnupur, Birbhum, Panchet, Jessore and Mahmudshahi were made upon an increasing Jumma. As the Bishnupur settlement was overrated the farmers expressed their indignation. A new settlement was therefore made. A similar rearrangement was also made in Panchet.³⁷ In the changed circumstances sometimes, security became the farmer and the Zamindar became the under-farmer (Kutkinadar) of their own hereditary property. In many of the areas of Jungle Mahals the Zamindars themselves were turned into farmers. The farmers were given amilnamas or commissions in the name of the Company's Government which gave them power to annul Zamindari pattas and to issue new pattas to the ryots.

The clash of interests between the farmers and under-farmers to shift the burden of responsibility to one another continued, giving rise to endless complica-

tions. In some cases the Zamindars were granted Mushoira or maintenance allowance when they themselves became farmers.

With the negation of hereditary rights of the Zamindars over the soil, the problem of repairing and maintaining embankments came to the forefront and it was found that the Government before the 90's of the century was slow to take over the responsibilities.³⁸ For drought and inundation sometimes remissions were made. But the process was a long drawn one. Even Zamindars were thrown into prison for non-payment of farmed revenue within the stipulated period.³⁹

It appears from the hustabood account for the Bengali year 1183 (1776-77 A.D) that the total jumma of Bishnupur for the Bengali year 1178 (1771-1772 A.D.) ~~A.D.~~ amounted to Sicca Rs.4,79,666-15 annas-16 gandas. This was increased by Sicca Rs.43,150-3 annas- 4 gandas in the Bengali year 1183 on account of the rise which had taken place in the mufassil revenues during the intervening five years. The jumma of the Bengali year 1178 with the increase of the subsequent five years thus came to Sicca Rs.5,22,871-3 annas, and the hustabood jumma

for the Bengali year 1183 aggregated Sicca
Rs. 5,18,731-13 annas-15 gandas.⁴⁰

The suspicion that the Zamindars had secret sources of income provoked agitation among the Zamindars.⁴¹ There could not be any register of pattas in these circumstances and new abuses crept into the system of collection of rent.

The general condition of the Zamindars became miserable. They became overwhelmed with debts. The ryots used to adopt fraudulent means to extend the limit of their farms and to lessen the amount of rent. The real aim of the farming system was the maximisation of rent. It made the position of the ryots insecure. The Zamindars were also denied of their customary rights of levying extra-imposts. There was no spectacular improvement in the system of tax-collection. The introduction of this confused system gave birth to an endless class of intermediaries like the farmers, securities, Kutkinadars, agents etc. in the production sector, each claiming his shares of surplus value of the produce. The proceedings of the Governor General

in Council make us to believe that tyranny, over-assessment and concealment became rampant. It also gave a free hand to the gomasthas, and the Patwaris as well as the naib-Diwan and his associates. The Zamindar's officials could easily defraud the ryots by refusing proper pattas to their disadvantage. Very often the farmers failed to realise money from the original producers which was eaten up by the intermediaries and therefore they were often in arrears. In 1776 however, the 'Amini Commission' was instituted to make an elaborate enquiry into value of the lands, farmer's accounts and to give special attention to the problem of security of original producers. But the Amins very often committed extortion over the Zamindars. Sometimes Zamindars were even flogged and imprisoned.⁴² The Five years settlement practically resulted in increased lawlessness in the estates of Bishnupur and other Jungle Mahals. Local responsibility for law and order could not be enforced in the changed circumstances. The small faujdari establishment of Warren Hastings could not maintain peace even in the settled areas as the refractory Zamindars, dispossessed Pykes and discontented Sardar-tahasildars became restless day by day.

Apart from the new farming system the Regulating Act of 1773 reorganised the Judiciary of the country. The Supreme Court was established with the aim of administering justice to the Company's servants and to protect the newly created landed interest. The utmost severity in collecting land revenue from Bengal during the years from 1772-76 did not meet with success. The actual receipts merely amounted to one half of the demand.⁴³

E. The period after 1777:-

The period from 1773 to 1781 the Government had followed the policy of centralisation by the creation of a Controlling Committee of Revenue at Calcutta with six provincial councils. Collectors were abolished and a body of native amils were appointed to collect revenues. In 1781 land revenue was increased by twenty-six lakhs. Zamindari system was again restored in 1777. Annual settlements were made from 1777-1789. It was decided that "revenue falling in balance he is to cause an adequate portion of his lands to be sold and the produce thereof to be paid to Government"...... In the case of a farmer's "revenue falling in balance he is to make good

the same by selling the substance and household effects together with those of his children and those of his relations who compose with him an undivided family".⁴⁴

The revenue of every district was to be settled with the Zamindars and they were given preference even if other persons were prepared to pay more. The medium of the net revenues received into the treasury in three preceding years became the standard for the jumma of most of the Zamindars of Bengal. The tendency towards the maximisation of revenue beginning with the introduction of the Five year farming system thus continued. The land revenue demand was beyond the capacity of the soil. Impoverishment of the Zamindars reached so acute a stage that difficulty was also experienced in the absence of securities to discharge their jumma punctually. The Zamindars were compelled to grant leases to the banians who lent them money. The inefficiency of this system had been described by John Shore in his minute of 1782.⁴⁵

The provisional councils of Revenue were, however, abolished in 1781 and the collectors returned to the districts. A Committee of Revenue was established in Calcutta. It consisted of five

experienced servants of the Company under the supervision of the Governor-General-in-Council. The principles of land-revenue remained same as before. Though the Zamindari system was restored, land-holding was henceforth governed not so much by usage as by contract.

The Diwani judicial system was sought to be improved in 1781 by the creation of new mofussil courts. The number of such courts had been increased to eighteen. Judicial proceedings from these district courts were submitted to Sadar Diwani Adalat.

It appears that some time prior to 1785, Bishnupur and Birbhum had been included within the district of Murshidabad. The famine of 1769-70 had depopulated the two districts of Birbhum and Bishnupur to such an extent that even in 1787, when the two districts were united and placed under one administrator, its effects were still apparent. During the first fifteen years after the famine, depopulation steadily increased. Large areas fell out of tillage and were covered up by jungles. The increasing revenue - demand of the Company's Government continued. They did not

reduce it. The revenue farmers, in many cases fell in arrears and were thrown in to prison. As a result, a competition grew up amongst landlords to procure husbandmen or ryots, because the existing body of husbandmen was inadequate to bring all available land under cultivation. This state of affairs gave birth to the classification of ryots or husbandmen into two distinct classes:-

1. Khudkhast ryots
2. Paikasht ryots

The Khudkhast ryots resided in the villages in which the lands cultivated by them were situated. The Paikasht ryots were those who were not residents in the villages in which the lands cultivated by them were situated. The Paikhasht ryots, therefore, came to enjoy many advantageous terms because it was not possible to get all the land of the village tilled by the resident ryots.

N.K.Sinha gives an indication of the problems faced by the Company's Government in trying to reclaim large parts of uncultivated land which existed in almost all the districts.

So far as the superior ryots of Bishnupur were concerned the farmers for the most part were mandals⁴⁶ (or headmen of villages) elected by agreement among themselves. There was therefore no competition when the farms were put up for auction unless some intruder or some dependents of Zamindar made his appearance. This ascendancy of the Mandals^{which} began in 1772^{The} was a result of the farming experiment. The mandals in Bishnupur or in Birbhum were in league with the village Patwaris who collected the rents for the Zamindars. Such domination by this privileged tenantry aggravated the plight of the lesser ryots.

The Collector of Birbhum reported in 1787. that, no observations had occurred to him either from experience or the suggestions of others, of any imperfections in the system of collections exercised by the renters under his authority.⁴⁷

The Board of Revenue in 1787 enquired into the oppression of the Zamindars or renters on the ryots. The Collector of Bishnupur reported that the Zamindars were ready to assert an unlimited authority, if allowed, but the residence of a European collector served as a sufficient check to

prevent any acts of tyranny and oppression⁴⁸

The Board of Revenue for a better settlement with the Zamindars also drew the attention of the collectors (1) to the amount of Jumma, (2) the persons with whom the settlement is to be made and (3) the rules for preventing oppressions on the ryots by the Zemindars as well collusions amongst the latter, tending to defraud the Zemindars of their just demand. In cases in which it may be thought most advantageous for the Government and the Zamindars that the land should be let out to a farmer, provision should be made for allotting a proportion of the produce of the lands to the Zamindar if he does not possess nijjote or other rent-free land or lands under-rated sufficient to furnish his maintenance⁴⁹

The tenure of land in Bishnupur was feudal in character and the Zamindar whose family had been in possession for 1,093 years paid a peskash or quit-rent of about Rs.1,60,000 only. In the year 1177 B.S the jumma was settled by Dawson. In 1179, however, the Government having granted several remissions it stood at

Rs. 4,11,868 and had fluctuated between this sum and that of the present Jumma of Rs. 3,86,707, but had never since amounted to the first and the accounts exhibit but one solitary instance in the year 1187 B.S., of the settlement having been realised. The district was well-cultivated but the bazee/zemin and chakeran establishments were so enormous and that the Government did not get more than one half of its resources. The Board of Revenue thus, thought that the present Jumma would not admit of any increase without a total reform and local investigation.⁵⁰

In spite of all these measures there was a marked decline of revenue on several occasions. The Collector informed the Board regarding the outstanding balance due from the Raja of Bishnupur⁵¹ (a) (~~Progs. of the B.R. 29th March, 8 April, 4 June, 1790~~). The Government sanctioned the proposal of the Board to adopt severe measures for the realisation of balances. The Collector was authorised to suspend from the balance due from Raja Chaitanya Singh on account of 1195 B.S. and the amount of his claims on one Baboo. Durpanarain Kur, until further orders. The Board directed the Collector that such part of the balance of Rs. 563-10 As-1 p,

appearing due to Raja Chaitanya Singh as might remain unpaid be carried to his credit towards the discharge of the balance ordered to be recovered from him on account of 1195 B.S.⁵² Raja Chaitanya Singh's territory was assessed at a jumma of four lakhs of rupees for ten years exclusive of sayer with an exception of Raja Damodar Singh's (cousin of Chaitanya Singh) share of the Beturjaut mahals and the talooks entitled to be separated under the orders of the Government. Raja Damodar Singh appealed to the Board to rent whole of the Zamaindari of Bishnupur. But his proposal had been turned down and a separate settlement had been made with him for his share of the Beturjaut Mehals.⁵³

Nearly a year had been elapsed after this settlement, the collector reported of the incapacity of Raja Chaitanya Singh to manage his Zamindari and recommended to the Board to take the country out of his hands. The Board informed the collector that as the Decennial Settlement of Bishnupur had been concluded with the Rajah, therefore, they could not interfere in the management of his lands.⁵⁴

The question of over-assessment was a mounting problem to the Zamindars. On several occasions representations had been received by the Board, both from the Zamindars of Birbhum and Bishnupur setting forth the heavy assessment of their lands and soliciting some indulgence. In the case of Bishnupur a moiety of the Zamindari was sold to make good the balance incurred in 1197 B.S.⁵⁵

As a consequence to the great famine of 1770 there was an alarming increase in the depredations of the dacoits in the districts of Bishnupur and Birbhum. They used to enter the two districts from the adjoining hilly countries and loot the villages. Infact, the creation of the new district of Birbhum and Bishnupur was due to such general state of lawlessness. Christopher Keating took the charge as the collector of the united district of Birbhum and Bishnupur in 1788. He was practically engaged to beat off the frequent attacks of the freebooters.

The disorders in Bishnupur were much greater. Because the Raja of Bishnupur was imprisoned at that time for arrears of land-tax. Hesilrige, the Head Assistant to the collector, was placed in charge

of his estates. The people of Bishnupur joined hands with the banditi to oppose the Government. The position of Keating became very much difficult. He made special arrangements to guard the hill-passes. Severe punishments were inflicted upon the marauders of Bishnupur. In the mid-summer of 1790 Keating ordered the senior captain "to station a military guard with an officer at Bishnupore", to punish the thieves and decoits.⁵⁶

The period thus marked the complete breakdown of law and order. Demands were made for the revision of assessment. The Collector recommended to the Board of Revenue to allow an abatement of Rs. 11,114-9As-7pies from the jumma of Bishnupur Zamindary belonging to Raja Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh, held Khas under a manager on account of deficiency of assets. ^{This} was summararily rejected by the Board. The Collector was informed that as the jumma fixed on the Zamindary was originally accepted by Raja Chaitanya Singh for the period of Decennial settlement, and as the manager of the estate was authorised to assess at the full rate, all lands included in the Zamindary which were not expressly exempted from the payment of revenue by the general regulations, the Board did not consider any abatement

necessary. The objections regarding over-assessment put forward by Raja Chaitanya Singh and Bahadur Singh, and their unwillingness to sign the cabuliyats for Decennial settlement remained unheard and the collector was desired to inform the Rajas that, as the Jumma on their lands having been already fixed, the Board Considered the lands responsible for the public assessment.⁵⁷

In such a situation the Zamindars could have been granted redress in two ways:-

(1) either by granting them moshaira stipend (2) or by deduction of a portion of Jumma. With the establishment of the supreme court in 1774, many cases came up for decision concerning the rights of Zamindars but they did not try to ascertain whether a Zamindar was the hereditary tax-officer or the owner of the soil.

The confusion reached its zenith when quarrel broke out between the judiciary and the executive. The Board of Revenue contended that the supreme court had no jurisdiction over the Zamindars but this was contested by the Judiciary. There was also confusion among the Company's local officers regarding their sphere of jurisdiction.

The problem of the Zamindar's right of maintaining local police would be vested in the collector or in the judge of mufussil court became a difficult one.

The responsibility of the Zamindars for the preservation and repair of embankments as mentioned in their sanads was practically rendered futile as they could not collect from the ryots an additional cess for poolbundy. Contracts offered by the Company's Government for the repair of embankments led to confusion and abuses. The repair of bunds were entrusted to the Zamindar "as they have been wholly neglected by his officers".⁵⁸ The Zamindars were generally held responsible for the robberies committed in their estates, but the thanadars and paiks as were maintained by them did not receive allowance from the Company's Government nor could they enjoy non-revenue paying land-tenure.

(II)

The permanent settlement
(1793 - 1805)

Cornwallis arrived in Bengal in September 1786. Revenue enquiries were made from 1786 to 1789 and

Regulations for the Decennial Settlement of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa(Midnapore) were passed respectively on 18th September 1789, 25th November, 1789 and 10th February, 1790.

(a) The phase of PrePermanent Settlement:

The years preceding the permanent Settlement were in many ways a period transition which witnessed the consolidation of the British grip over the south-western part of Bengal. This period witnessed the gradual Europeanisation of administrative ^{58a} machinery and the enhancement of magisterial power of the district Collectors. The old Governmental framework with ~~Q~~anungos and some nizamat offices were discarded on ground of distrust. The Collector's salary and responsibilities were increased. They were offered the post of Judge of the Courts of Revenue; they were also to administer criminal justice(27th June, 1787). As a possible check to magisterial oppression, by Regulation II of 1793, the Board of Revenue and the Collectors were deprived of all judicial powers where as the judges were appointed to sit in the District Diwani Adalats. These judge-magistrates appointed

mostly from ~~Ex~~-Collectors were also empowered to preside over the criminal courts in circuit. In many cases differences of opinions arising out of difference of interests between the Collectors and the judges prevented concerted action to check lawless elements in the country side. The principle of "Local police, local responsibility" was given up. The Zamindari chowkies on the river-banks were also ordered to be abolished. As there was no definite thanadari system, (from 1775 to 1785) the activities of the free-booters could not be checked effectively by sending military troops only. The military troops in many cases committed excesses over the peaceful inhabitants of the countryside. The economic dislocation arising out of the unsettlement of land revenue system led to anarchy and discord. Since 1785, with the reorganisation of the police system, thanadari frame work came to be evolved in a distinct form. The Zamindars were directed to disband their paik-militia. The superior position of the thanadars who were coming from outside and being appointed by the Government, made the Zamindars hostile to them. Moreover, corruption in the system due to poor pay and other sources of illegal gratifications

-106-

which were rampant, rendered the project quite ineffective.

The maxim that "there can not be robbery without receivers of the robbed property" became true as gang robbery was linked up with higher class of people like the 'Mahajans' (money-lenders) and Zamindari 'amlas'. Moreover, the gradual urbanisation, lossening tie of the joint family connections, natural calamities, (viz, drought, flood etc.) maratha invasions and gradual pauperisation of agricultural community prepared the ground for the increase of crime in villages.

Apart from this, the rapid urbanisation of the social set up resulted in the emergence of a new middle class. The Zamindari amlas, the vakils, the Mahajans, though not included in the agricultural sector, but subsisting mainly on it, now forming a distinct class by themselves ushered in a new-money-economy unnoticed before.⁵⁹ They often gave incentive to gang robbery and thus helped the spread of crime. After 1793, however, strict administrative reforms became successful in checking such corruption and crime. In order to set up a clean form of administration, Cornwallis ventured to wipe out corruption among the European officers, but he failed

-107-

to wipe out corruption among the Indian official rank, It was, therefore, felt by the Company's Government that the only solution to these problems rested on the final solution of the land settlement question. The pre-permanent settlement period resulted in the increasing recognition of the Zamindar's right over the soil but not over its fruits.

(b) Permanent Settlement and its effects:

Cornwallis had some very definite views. He faced with three much-debated problems, to be decided upon:-

- (1) Whether the Zamindars were the hereditary proprietors or tax-collectors of the soil;
- (2) What would be the best mode of effective tax-collections; and
- (3) Could the Government descend to the ryots?

As agriculture was the principal source of the riches of Bengal it was necessary to make the assessment upon the lands as little burdensome as possible. Therefore, lands were to be settled with the Zamindars permanently and the assessment was to be fixed. This idea

of permanent Settlement of lands to the landed proprietors was no new experiment of Cornwallis. The question of Permanent Settlement had been discussed time and again.

To the Company's Government's determination of the hereditary proprietor of the soil was not the main problem. The problem was one of land revenue and how it could be collected regularly. It was found inexpedient to establish direct contact with the ryots.⁶⁰ Cornwallis wanted to settle the ^{lands} ~~the~~ permanently with the most painstaking people and not with the existing Zamindars. He also felt the necessity of framing regulations to ensure security of the ryots and the dependent talukdars. Early in 1793, therefore, Permanent Settlement of Revenue was promulgated. In the field of agrarian relationship it was thought that the permanent settlement would bring order out of chaos. But in practice, the settlement, with its rigidity, created new conditions which intensified abuses, perpetuated many existing evils and started many others. The settlement was characterised by over-assessment as before. From a report on the Decennial Settlement we find that Birbhum Jumma of 1789-90 was Rs. 9,98,028- Sair abolished Rs. 18,151, Jumma which was made permanent was Rs. 10,31,848. Bishnupur came under the Collector of

Burdwan in June 1793. The land revenue of the Bishnupur estates which was assessed at the time of the Permanent Settlement was Rs.135,989-6 annas -5 p.

The Zamindars were debarred from any remission in case of loss caused by any natural calamity. In case of a default in payment, their estates would be sold in liquidation of balance.⁶¹

The Zamindar could not even impose any extra imposts on the ryots as abwabs or mathot.⁶² The system also resulted in the increased oppression of the Zamindar's amlas over the ryots. Another result of the permanent settlement was the introduction of Patni tenure. The Patni system gave birth to various number of intermediaries whose pressure was distinctly felt over the poor ryots. Socially speaking these intermediaries used to live among the agricultural community and in order to justify their new role they adjusted themselves to the "easy-going, indolent and not altogether self-satisfied life which prevailed in Zamindari society". "Rack-renting became a feature of this land system". Cornwallis's assumption that the Zamindars would grant pattas to the ryots proved futile.⁶³ So far as the grant of patta^{63(a)} is concerned the Board

-110-

of Revenue approved the measures adopted by the collector for the purpose of securing compliance with the regulations⁶⁴ of the Government regarding distribution of pattaahs in the Zamindaries of Birbhum and Bishnupur and instructed him to consider the ~~65th~~ Article of the above Regulations to be in full force in all instances in the district.

The Board also considered the matter of delay of the Zamindars of Bishnupur, Burrowhazarry and Curreesoondah in distributing pattaahs to the ryots and remarked that such acts on the part of the Zamindars were highly reprehensible. It empowered the Collector to enforce the 25th Article of the Regulations passed on 23 November, 1791 with respect to the Zamindars and their under-tenants in matters of delay in the delivery of regular pattaahs.⁶⁵

In spite of all these measures there is no such records to prove that the jungle Zamindars granted regular pattaahs to their ryots.

The inevitable results of the **P**ermanent Settlement also fell on the agricultural community whose socio-economic position deteriorated gradually. The

-111-

victims of this system were generally (1) Peasantry with land but no stock (2) Peasants with stock but no land and (3) Different classes of landless day and seasonal labourers. The decline of the independent peasantry was to a large extent the outcome of the growth of a richer section of cultivators with stock, land and sometimes with an alternative means of production. The position of the traders and manufacturers of home-made industries had some other means of subsistence besides land. Their privileged position compelled the daily labourers to be dependent on them. The traditional armed-retainers who under the new system had become revenue tahasildars or Subarakars of the Company came to enjoy a better position in the socio-economic structure of the country and it may be said that they formed the genesis of the middle class of the later period.

(c) The Chuar Rebellion of 1799:

The Chuars or paiks were really the poorest section of the peasantry, who had been driven away from their lands by the Britishers and their local accomplices. Towards the close of the 18th century, they broke out in open revolt in various parts of the country. The background of the chuar rebellion of 1799 lies in the

effects of the Permanent Settlement which resulted in ~~a~~ ^{The} fast decline not only in the status of the propertied class but of the original producers as well.⁶⁶ The chuars of Bankura and Midnapore concerned in this outbreak were mostly lower caste hindus of those districts. In Kavi-Kankan Mukundaram Chakravarti's "Chandi-Mangal" Kala-Ketu, a hunter and trapper by profession describes himself as 'chuar'. We may assume that the appellation of "chuar" or "choar" was given at the end of the 16th century to people of low castes. In the years 1799 and 1800 there were uprisings by the Zamindari Pykes in the districts of Midnapore and Bankura as a protest against the resumption of lands that had so long been enjoyed by them on a service-tenure for the performance of police duties. S.B. Choudhuri explained the background of the chuar uprisings⁶⁷ in this region.

The stronghold of the chuars was in Manbhum and Barabhum particularly in the hills between Barabhum and Ghatsila. They enjoyed land under a kind of feudal tenure. They were not attached to the soil. The chuars, it is said, "were bred up much for pillaging as for cultivating" and pay a rent from the profits of both the occupations.

In a letter of the collector of Midanpore to Hastings Dated 23rd Nov, 1781, the rents of the jungle Zamindars were described as a kind of quit-rent collected from their paiks and chauars, who were inhabitants of these Zamindars' ^{estates}. Even under the muslim rule, this part of the country was infested with chuars. The Company's Government had sent several expeditions against the chuars in 1767, 1769 and 1770. But all these punitive expeditions did not meet with any spectacular success. So, a scheme of building small thanas in the interior part of the country with 60 sepoy each was put into execution to defend the country from the depredations by chuars. Later on in the 1795, the land-holders of the jungle Mahals were empowered with a joint charge of the police of their respective estates in ~~connect~~ ^{concert} -ion with the daroghs appointed under Regulation of 1793. They were required to guard against the chuars as a reward of which their paikan lands which had been resumed were restored.⁶⁸

The chuar rebellion may also be regarded as a protest against the strict laws by which defaulting zamindars were wiped out and new middle class people got entry into the soil. Apart from this the policy of the Government to secure non-revenue paying lands culminated

in the economic ruin of the Zamindars and also of their traditional armed-retainers. The rules of 1793 empowered the collectors to proceed by suit in court as plaintiffs, against any person holding rent-free lands without a valid tenure. Moreover, the general discontent of the agrarian sector of the period was broadly due to the introduction of two Governmental measures viz; (1) that the Zamindari tenure are liable for sale for arrears of jumma, (2) resumption of rent-free lands.⁶⁹

To sum up, the application of sale laws, resumption of Paikan lands, the rapid pauperisation of chuar ryots and the consequent unsettlement in the social relationships, were, therefore, the main causes for the chuar Rebellion of 1799.

The chuars, who, under the new system lost their financial position and status in the society became disgusted.⁷⁰ They found no other alternative but to rise in revolt in furthering their objects.

The most persistent threat to British order, however, came from the paiks of the chuars. Thus the Chuar Rebellion of 1799 like the paik disturbances of the previous generations took place under the leadership of the

Naik^{or} Paik community, who were traditionally a military caste and were for generations able leaders.

The rebellion soon took a serious turn. Many zamindars and land-lords, viz, the Zamindar of Bogri, Rani of Karangarh, talukdars of Raipur and Phulkusma joined their hands with the chuars in committing depredations in their region. The troubles in the jungle Mahals alarmed the authorities at Calcutta.⁷¹ The Company's Government deployed army in putting them down and it took nearly a year to check the revolt. The result of the rebellion was so disastrous that in 1802, the Board of Revenue approved the proposal of Charles Blunt, Commissioner of Burdwan, and deputed him to enquire into the defalcation of the assets of the Bishnupur Zamindari and directed him to inspect personally the state of the mahals and the ryots who had been deserted in consequence of the incursions of the chuars.⁷²

As a consequence of these disturbances the Government recognised the rights of the proprietors over the soil. The Zamindars of Jungle- Mahals were empowered to maintain peace in their respective territories

-116-

and the stringent sale laws were not to be enforced arbitrarily for the time being. A conciliatory policy towards the dissatisfied jungle zamindars of the disturbed region was also adopted by Henry Strachey who had been placed in charge of the district.

It also marked the future improvement in the field of administration in the district of Jungle-Mahals.

(III)

Affairs of Raja Chaitanya Singh of Bishnupur and the role of the East India Company there in:-

In June 1793, Bishnupur came under the Collector of Burdwan. The then collector of Burdwan in a letter⁷³ to the President and members of the Board of Revenue at Fort William, Calcutta stated that, Bishnupur was one of the most ancient estates in the country. In the present proprietor's family there was some quarrel regarding succession. Some years ago the head of a Junior branch of this family named Damodar Singh driving out the senior, captured the Zamindari, but a military force sent by the Government after defeating him, restored the fugitive Chaitanya Singh, to possession as sole zamindar. A few

days later Damodar Singh, so subdued, by the decision of the Company's Resident at Murshidabad was entitled to one half of the district. Chaitanya appealed to the Governor-General-in-Council and obtained a decree in his favour confirming him in the possession as zamindar and declaring ^{that} his younger cousin ^{was} Damodar Singh ^{entitled} only to a maintenance. (The decree is ~~said to~~^{dated} be dated 1787.)

In 1791, a new decision was communicated to the collector of Birbhum whereby the Zamindary was again divided between the contended parties. The Board of Revenue requested the Collector to call upon the joint proprietors viz, Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh. It also instructed the collector to appoint a manager, and to divide between Chaitanya and Damodar the surplus proceeds of the Zamindary above the assessment in equal proportions. It was decided that if either of the Zamindars should claim an exclusive right to the Zamindary⁷⁴, such claim must be prosecuted in the Dewani Adalat.

Accordingly Lalla Jewan Lall had been appointed as manager of the joint estates of Raja Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh.⁷⁵ Chaintanya instituted a suit

in the Dewani Adalat of Birbhum which the judge dismissed. The plaintiff, however, persisting in his claim, appealed to the Sadar Diwani Adalat where for the time being such claim remained undetermined.

Previous both to the Decennial Settlement and the order for dividing the zamindari the gross assests of Bishnupur being rated at about Sa.Rs.460,269, the proprietors, adjudged entitled to one eleventh part only of the net estimate collections. But under the Khas collections of that year, the country yielded only Sa.Rs.409,000 which was much less than the estimate. At this juncture chaitanya Singh, called upon to make his Decennial settlement, engaged for annual jumma of Rs.400,000. Chaitanya being fearful of Damodar, who might supersede him with an offer of that amount readily accepted the engagement. But at the end of the year more than half of his Zamindari was sold to realise the balance of revenue. In the interim period Damodar Singh who was also declared entitled to half the estates also suffered equally.⁷⁶

The circumstances thus occurred became extremely injurious to them which ultimately led to their utter ruin. The Rajas of Bishunupur alleged that the

jumma assigned to them after the sale of their land at the khalsa to liquidate the balance of 1198.B.S. was over-rated in the sum of Sa.Rs.20,467. The Rajas of Bishnupur gradually became impoverished on account of over-assessment and internal quarrel amongst themselves. On several occasions they failed to clear up the balances of revenue, as a result of which some of their mahals were sold out.

However, in 1792, by the decree of the Governor-General in Council it was decided that Bishnupur Zamindary would be the joint properties of Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh and the collector was directed accordingly to call upon the legal heirs and representatives of the deceased Damodar for the jumma assessed on their estates.⁷⁷

In case of the balances of revenue due from the ryots of Bishnupur the collector while explaining the causes of such delay reported that the delay in the recovery of balances was owing to the operation of new regulations for distraint etc. The collector was instructed to keep his eyes open to the activities of the Zamindars and manager and to assist the ryots during his stay at Bishnupur to obviate any illegal obstruction to the Regulations being carried into effect.⁷⁸

The letter of the collector of Burdwan of date, ^{Th. ruary,} 12 Feb, 1794, which depicted a true picture of the condition of Zamindars of Bishnupur estates and of the question of over-assessment compelled the Board to institute an enquiry into the matter. ^{To} ~~The~~ expediate the same, the Board of Revenue

entrusted the collector with the power to examine the records relating to the Zamindari of Bishnupur. The collector examined all the records carefully and submitted a report on 26 June, 1794.

A careful examination of the collector's report clearly showed that at the time of Decennial settlement, the assessment on Bishnupur was over-rated. The annual revenue of Rs. 400,000 which was forced upon Raja Chaitanya Singh was too much for his estates. Hesilrige, a covenanted civilian, had been deputed to take charge of the collections of the district with a view to find out the real sources of the Zamindari. Accordingly to the direction of the Board, he resumed all chakran lands and all invalid lakheraj grants. Under his Khas management the total collection including the balances of that year subsequently recovered amounted to Rs. 419,539 only.

After deducting 1/11th of this sum on account of malikana the balance left was Rs. 381,399 only. Naturally, therefore, there was no justification for fixing up the assessment at Rs. 400,000 at the time of the Decennial settlement. This shows the injustice of the company's Government which was perpetuated on Chaitanya Singh.⁷⁹ As the assessment on Bishnupur was over-rated and as the Zamindar was entitled to compensation for the error committed by the sale of lands for alleged arrears, the collector also quoted a letter of Keating dated, 25th August, 1791,

which affirms that Chaitanya Singh was compelled to agree to the terms of the Decennial settlement. Chaitanya Singh was thrown to prison as he was a defaulter, until the orders of the Board of Revenue were communicated to him by Keating. The findings of Samuel Davis, the Collector of Burdwan did not apparently prevail with the Board of Revenue which went on ordering the sale of Raja's lands for the realisation of the arrears of revenue.⁸⁰ It is obvious that on the order of the Board of Revenue, the Collector carefully examined the records relating to the Zamindari of Bishnupur and submitted a report on the 26th June 1794.⁸¹ But the report proved fruitless. It failed to convince the Board of Revenue. The injustice which was perpetuated on Chaitanya Singh had been also described by F.W. Robertson, who was the Settlement Officer, of Bankura during 1917-24 settlement operations. He said that, "This settlement of Bishnupur Pargana is an illustration of the injustices which were so often perpetrated at the time of the Decennial settlement and the folly of making that settlement permanent".

It is not clear why an assessment higher than the Khas collections of Hesilrige should be imposed upon the estate, especially when certain assets (e.g. Sair collections) which had formed part of the earlier ^{khas} ~~has~~ collections had since been abolished by the Regulations of Government, and the Zamindar was no longer authorised to collect them. The value of these abolished assets was subsequently in 1794 estimated by the Collector, (Davis), to amount over

Rs. 10,000. There is, however, reasons to believe that the Board of Revenue while approving the assessment took into account* the latent resources of the estate as disclosed by the enquiries made during the period of management of Hesilrige. "These 'latest resources' consisted in the power to resume all chakran, jagir, and invalid lakheraj grants and to settle them at full pargana rates". But these resources could not be rendered immediately productive as other assets. The conclusion is inevitable "that not only was the Decennial settlement assessment of Pargana Bishunupur unfair, but to make it permanent deprived Government for ever of the additional resources which, to the knowledge of Government existed, and which time and good management could not fail to make productive".⁸²

Chaitanya Singh failed to clear up his dues at the end of the first year of the Decennial settlement. As a result of which the mahals of Barahazari and Karisunda were sold in 1791 under the order of the Board of Revenue for realisation of arrears from him. And these mahals were purchased by Maharaja Tej Chand of Burdwan Raj family. Chaitanya Singh was left with a jumma of Rs. 185,853, but this amount seems to have been overassessed because the portion sold was under assessed. The Board of Revenue, however, reconsidered the state of affairs.

In 1794, however, the Board recommended to ~~the~~ Government ^{That} ~~than~~ an abatement of Jumma of Rs. 10,383-1 a-10 Ps.

be granted to Raja Chaitanya Singh of his portion of the Bishnupur Zamindari. It also recommended that, in the readjustment of the Jumma of that portion of Bishnupur Zamindari which belonged to Raja Chaitanya, an adequate allowance be granted from the gross jumma, so adjusted for the maintenance of the Zamindar and his family.⁸³

In 1795, also the Board ordered the accumulated balance to be written off and the revenue payable by chaitanya Singh being reduced to Rs.150,271-4as-13 gondas. The Government's order regarding the readjustment of the jumma of the remaining portion of lands in Bishnupur Zamindari belonging to Raja Chaitanya Singh⁸⁴ resulted in the abatement of Rs.26,205-10 as-12 ps - 1 gonda. Moreover, the Government fully appreciating the Board's suggestion was of opinion that, it was inexpedient to require Raja Chaitanya Singh to pay an increase on the expectation of waste lands brought into cultivation. This suggestion of the Government had been duly communicated to the collector concerned.⁸⁵

But an internal quarrel with his younger brother Damodar Singh prevented Chaitanya Singh from clearing up his dues. This quarrel which had been dragged on for years together finally came to a close by the decision of the Governor-General in Council. Chaitanya Singh and Damodar Singh were declared joint-share holders of the inheritance. "But before the Decree was obtained, one brother (Chaitanya) was a white-haired imbecile prisoner in the Debtor's jail; the other (Damodar) lay impervious to joy or sorrow on his

death -bed". Against this decision Chaitanya Singh appealed to the Diwani Adalat at Birbhum and finally managed to obtain the bulk of the property in 1794 when he was an old and almost a ruined man. The year 1791 was thus a curse for Chaitanya Singh, because in that year he was confronted with two adverse circumstances; one, an increased assessment of land revenue and the other, vexations and costly litigations with his younger brother Damodar.

In the period of post-permanent Settlement the problem of over-assessment remained as before. On the order of the Board of Revenue Raja Chaitanya Singh's estates were attached finally in 1799 for realisation of arrears of revenue.⁸⁶ Finding no other alternative, Chaitanya Singh's son and grandsons took recourse to violence for preserving their estates. The Sezawal, who was deputed to attach the estates of the Raja reported that the son and grandsons of the Raja had recruited a large number bowmen and barkandazes from among the chuars with the help of which force they prevented the Sezawal from collecting the revenue of the attached Mahals.

Raja Chaitanya Singh and his followers also created disturbances to oust the Raja of Burdwan and Baboo Hurry Das pautuck, Zamindar of Pargana Jamtarrah, Bishnupur from the lands which the latter purchased at a public sale for recovery of arrears of revenue.⁸⁷

As a further measure of defeating the Government, Chaitanya Singh began to issue "Brahmattar and "Devattar" rent-free grants in respect of the disputed lands. Such action compelled Burges, the then collector of Burdwan, to recommend the immediate attachement of Lakheraj grants which might have been alienated from kheraj or Public revenue since the commencement of the Decennial settlement, knowing fully well that the regulations of the Government required the collector to resort to the court for the recovery of all improper alienations. Chaitanya Singh granted 19 villages as 'Devattar' to Damun Sing Takoor in 1790. The Board also considered the 'Devattar' lands claimed by Neemy Sing on the strength of the sunud given by his father Raja Chaitanya Singh as private lands, ^{Therefore,} and subject to resumption and informed the collector to call upon his Assistants to submit an account of the seperate collections made from the lands, stating whether their produce for the year 1789 would be adequate to the payment of the whole of the monthly allowance of Rs.1,000 granted for the maintenance of Rajah Chaitanya Singh and his family.^{87(a)} All these struggles of the Raja of Bishnupur to save his estates proved fruitless. And eventually in 1806 his ancestral lands were sold out for arrears of land revenue ^{87(b)} (a Demand of Rs.187,916) by the Company's Government and was purchased by the rich and powerful Maharaja of Burdwan for Rs.215,000 only. The Zamindari thus lost, the family became dependent upon small

pensions granted by the Government and upon what little Devattar property they could salvage, ^{thus came the end of the Bishnupur Raj,} ruling Mallabhum for centuries with benevolence and splendour.

(IV)

The period from 1800-1833:-

(a) Administrative changes:-

The term 'Jungle-Mahals' have been applied in the 18th century to the British possessions and some dependent chiefdoms lying between Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore and the hilly country of Chhota-Nagpur. As the system was not precise, inconvenience was often caused by the vagueness of the jurisdiction in these tracts. The district was created with an objective to strengthen the administration of the area.

In 1781, some of the Zamindars of jungle Mahals while giving description of their country wrote: "It is a jungle, that their rents are a kind of quit-rent collected from their paiks and chuars". They were surrounded like wise by jungle zamindars on the east by Bogri and Bishnupur, on the north by Pachet on the west by Singhbhoom, on the south by Mayurbhanj.⁸⁸

The five years farming settlement of Birbhum, Bishnupur and Pachet (Panch Kot) was made by the council on an increasing revenue, on a plan similar to other farmed lands.

In the early phase of British rule for the help of the civil administration in case of trouble in the district of Jungle Mahals, small military troops were stationed at Jhalda and Raghunathpur (Now in the district of Purulia). The police administration of the area was somewhat peculiar. The Zamindars were to maintain such numbers of ^{Pais}Pykes and other watchmen as might be fixed by the magistrate with the approval of the Government. A list of such persons appointed by the Zamindars was to be given to the magistrate and all changes were to be reported to him. These ^{Pais}Pykes or watchmen were placed under the authority of the magistrate and in case of negligence of duty they were punishable by him. The Zamindars were required to help the Darogah and to send persons apprehended for heinous crimes to the nearest Darogah or to the magistrate within 24 hours. By the new regulations which were introduced later on, the Zamindars who were trouble-makers in the past and had caused breaches of the peace were made responsible for the maintenance of law and order. In the Regulations governing administration of the new Jungle-Mahals, it was prescribed that no Zamindar shall summon the ryots of another, nor where the police officers of one Zamindar to be sent into the territory of another without an application or the orders of the magistrate.

So far as Bishnupur is concerned, the Board of Revenue in 1800 approved the deputation of G. Sutter,

Assistant Collector, to take charge of the Zamindari of Bishnupur on account of arrears of revenue due from the proprietor.⁸⁹

It also approved the collector's proposition for the resumption of all lands in the Bishnupur Zamindary which appear from the hustabood accounts to have been alienated by the Zamindar Raja Chaitanya Singh since the Decennial Settlement.⁹⁰

The Board's order to enquire into the arrears of revenue due from Bishnupur Mahals was duly communicated to commissioner Charles Blunt in 1802. And an enquiry was instituted to ~~realise~~ ^{realise} the dues from 'Hooadahs Nuga' 'Mulbariah' and Hautleah (in Bishnupur pargana) and to ascertain the actual arrears held under benami farm by Kshetra Mohan Singh, one of the sons of Raja Chaitanya Singh.⁹¹

Charles Blunt in 1802, was deputed to enquire into the cause of the heavy outstanding balance of "Ughran Kist" (Payment of the fasti year) due from several farmers became partly successful in realising a greater part of the balances. In the meantime the old infirm and impoverished Zamindar Raja Chaitanya Singh wanted to make over all his rights in the Bishnupur Zamindari to his grand son Madhoo Singh. Such proposal of the Board, and the collector was informed to do the needful in the matter concerned.⁹²

In 1805,⁹³ a regulation was passed (Reg. XVIII) by which the district known as 'Jungle -Mahals',

situated in the Zillas of Birbhum, Midnapore and Burdwan were separated from the jurisdiction of an officer called the magistrate of the 'Jungle-Mahals'. "The district thus formed composed of 23 Parganas and mahals, of which 15, including Panchet were transferred from Birbhum, three were transferred from Burdwan, viz, Sempahari, Shergarh and Bishnupur, excepting the police circle of Kotalpur and the contiguous Pargana of Balsi, which remained under the jurisdiction of the magistrate of Burdwan and five were transferred from Midnapore, viz, Chhatna, Barabhum, Manbhum, Supur, Ambikanagar, Simlapal and Bhalaidiha." It was further provided that half-yearly jail deliveries for the Jungle-Mahals should holden by one of the Judges of the Court of circuit for the division of Calcutta and that the Jungle-Mahals should continue subject in all matters of civil cognizance to the Courts of Diwani Adalat for the respective zillas to which they had hitherto been attached.

"The Judge and Magistrate of the Jungle-Mahals zilla was Alexander Bruere Todd, drawing pay of Rs.2,333, who was assisted by a Registrar, Thomas Pakenham, on Rs.500 and an Assistant Surgeon on Rs.300. The head quarters were at Bankura, and there were seven thanas transferred from Burdwan and two from Midnapore, viz, Chhatna and Bara Sarenga. The annual cost of Judicial establishment was Rs.7,347, including police and contingencies and we find entries of Rs.11,160 payable to the Zamindar of

Bishnupur and his family and of Rs. 476 paid as allowances to 19 Zamindars employed to act as police officers in Panchet (described as lately under the Birbhum Magistrate). The revenue administration of the district was supervised by the Burdwan Collector, but was under the direct control of Mr. Pakhenham who is described as ex-officio assistant stationed at Bankura, drawing pay of Rs. 200 a month".⁹⁴

(B) Resumption of rent-free lands:-

Chaitanya's sons and grand sons issued many lakheraj grants after the Decennial settlement. The Government intimated to the Board that in all cases where they have grounds for thinking the grants of lakheraj lands made previously to 1st December 1790, are invalid. In such cases they should instruct the commissioner to institute necessary suits for recovery of the revenues of such lands in the Adawlut, and the revenues of such resumed lands will be fixed in conformity with the rules laid down in clauses 2 and 3 of section 8 of Regulation XIX of 1793,⁹⁵ It was also decided that in cases of the lands held rent-free by the relatives of the Raja of Bishnupur, it will be seen that, there was reason to believe the grants of the land as rent-free were antedated, and that the grants had not been registered in conformity with the rules prescribed for that purpose, they were annexed to mulguzary lands and that they will not be alienated from the mulguzary land unless the parties can establish their right to them in the courts of Justice.⁹⁶

From 1800 ~~A.D.~~ one of the most important duties of the Commissioner of Bishnupur was the resumption of lakheraj grants. Sir Charles Blunt, the Commissioner of Bishnupur estimated in 1801 the annual value of the resumable lakheraj grants in that portion of Bishnupur which was committed to his charge at Rs.40,000. The major part of resumption work, however, began in 1835. The resumption proceedings culminated in popular discontent and distrust for the performance of certain police duties. Some persons were granted rent-free lands known as Ghatwali lands (for defending ghats or passes over the hills) and Simandari lands (for watching over the boundary or Simana of the country) in the district of Bankura. The Ghatwali system was feudal in character. In return for performing police duties the Ghatwals were granted rent-free lands or lands in lieu of a small quit-rent (Panchak) payable directly to the Zamindar. The permanent settlement empowered the magistrate to supervise the police administration and to appoint or dismiss the Ghatwals.

In this connection reference may be made to the extracts of Paragraphs 2 and 3 from Government's letter to the magistrate vesting him with powers to appoint Ghatwals in Bishnupur parganah, and in the places under his jurisdiction. Whenever those offices (of Ghatwals) may become vacant from death, desertion or any other cause the collector should inform the magistrate about that. The collectors were also informed to make speedy arrangements for

recovery of arrears of revenue due from the Ghatwals of Bishnupur.⁹⁷

Apart from the resumption of different types of rent-free grant of lands, the jungle lands were also rented. One Gocul chand Mittra made a petition to the Board⁹⁸ claimining to hold 10,000 bighas of waste jungle lands in Bishnupur estate at a fixed rent of two annas per bigha, or four annas in such cases as the land yields two crops a year. The Government suggested to the Board that it would be advisable to leave the claim of G.C.Mittra to the lands to be settled between him and the new proprietor of the estate.⁹⁹

All these processes adopted by the Company's Government were aimed at maximisation of revenue completely ignoring the age-old traditions and sentiments of the people of the country.

So far as Ghatwali establishments were concerned, there was suspicion in the mind of the Government regarding their efficiency. Extracts from the proceedings of the judicial department clearly showed the inefficiency of the Ghatwali establishments to protect Bishnupur Parganah from the incursions of chuars and plunderers from the jungles on the western frontier.¹⁰⁰

At the suggestion of Charles Blunt, the Commissioner of Bishnupur, the Raja of Bishnupur agreed to part with his lands covered by Ghatwali tenures on the

conditions that (1) his revenue should be reduced by the amount which he was entitled to receive from the Ghatwals by way of Panchak. (2) Should the establishment of Ghatwals at anytime be considered unnecessary or should their lands at anytime be resumed they should be re-annexed to the Zamindari and (3) he be relieved from payment of the balance of revenue due from the Ghatwali mahals which had accumulated since his estate had been under attachment.

Sir Charles Blunt in 1802¹⁰¹ prepared a Report about Ghatwali lands within the estates of the Raja of Bishnupur in which he showed the number of Ghats paying Panchak to the Raja as 43, the number of Ghatwalis employed as 2,299, the area of the land as 35,282 bighas and the Panchak payable as Rs.4,690-12 as -7 pies. The Ghats that were detached from the estates of the Raja were thereafter known as Sarkari Panchaki Ghats. The Ghats of the other parts of the district ^{which} continued to pay rent to the Zamindar were called Zamindari Panchaki Ghats. The Ghats (numbering 11) which paid no Panchak were called Bepanchaki Ghats. In course of time the Ghatwali system became difficult one and ^{turned to be} became a headache to the Government. The final result of the resumption of Ghatwali lands may be noticed in the settlement operations in the district of Bankura in 1917-1924. In 1806, however, the collector was directed to state whether in the event of Government approving the deduction proposed to be made on account of Panchaky abwab, the whole amount

should be deducted from the Jumma of the parganah Burohazari (in Bishnupur estate) or whether some portion of it should not be deducted from the Jumma of other Bishnupur Mahals purchased by the Rajah of Burdwan at the time ~~of~~ he purchased the parganah.¹⁰²

The rent-free Simandari lands were also resumed on the following terms:-

(1) That the lands should be assessed at full rates and the Simandars given occupancy rites.

(2) That the rent assessed should be payable to the Zamindar, one half of the amount of the rent payable being due to Government as revenue from the Zamindar.

Another type of land which was also resumed was the Sahar-tainati ~~Chow-~~ Chowkidari Chakran lands.

For many years it was a practice of the Rajas of Bishnupur to appoint Chowkidars for the watch and ward of their capital city. Lands were generally granted to them in lieu of their services. In 1879, however, these lands were resumed by the Government.

The Maharaja of Burdwan purchased the estates of Barahazari, Karisunda, Jungle-Mahals and the entire estates of the Raja of Bishnupur. After purchasing these estates he created under-tenures known as Patni taluks. The Patni tenure was in effect a lease which bound his holder by the same terms and conditions as those

by which the superior landlord was bound to the state. In 1811, however, the Company's Government undertook elaborate measures for the collection of public revenue in the jungle Mahals.¹⁰³

In 1832, however, the peace of the newly formed district of Jungle-Mahals was broken on account of the disturbances termed as 'Ganga Narayan hangama', which originated from a disputed succession to the Barabhum Raj.¹⁰⁴

(c) New administrative set-up:-

As a result of this well-known Bhumij rebellion in the Jungle-Mahals and Bogri Pargana in Midnapore (Ganga-Narayan Hangama) a change in the administrative pattern of the 'Jungle-Mahals' district was enforced. The Regulation XIII of 1833 provided for the separation of certain tracts, included at that time in the districts of Ramgarh, Jungle Mahals and Midnapore from those districts and for placing them under an officer designated as the Agent to the Governor-General. All the Mahals of the district of Jungle-Mahals except Senpahari, Shergarh and Bishnupur were to be included in the newly formed South-West Frontier Agency and placed under an Agent to the Governor-General.

The Agent was to be placed in charge of the administration of civil and criminal justice, the collection of revenue, the superintendence of police, land revenue customs, Akbari stamps and every branch of Government

within the South-West Frontier Agency. The Court of Diwani Adalat was discontinued and appeals against the decision of the Agent and his assistants in civil suits were to lie to the Sadar Diwani Adalat in Calcutta. To make it clear, by the Regulation of XIII of 1833 the district of the Jungle-Mahals was abolished, the greater part of it being formed into the district of Manbhum. In 1834 the town of Bankura was transferred from the South-Western Frontier Agency to Burdwan, and a joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector was placed in charge of Bishnupur with headquarters at Bankura.

CHAPTER-II

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2 lakh per annum, and Shitab Roy at Patna Rs.99,996. The latter was also granted a monthly allowance of Rs.25,000 by Lord Clive and the Select Committee. In 1771 the Court of Directors ordered Muhammad Riza Khan's salary to be reduced to five lakhs per annum) has been credited by grant with "honour, sagacity, moderation, locally understood," and is described by the same authority as 'the great defaulter'. Grant's opinion is that Muhammad Riza Khan, who he says, had confessed to having in two years incurred a balance of 2 krores of rupees of the Bengal revenues, was a wholesale plunderer. Grant also holds "that the actual system of revenue in Bengal was from the beginning (1765) taken upon on mistaken grounds. It is a baseless fabric reared in ignorance, corruption, chicanery of the natives, intended to conceal from superficial popular view or perhaps ultimately to destroy the symmetry, convenience and simplicity of the outward structure).

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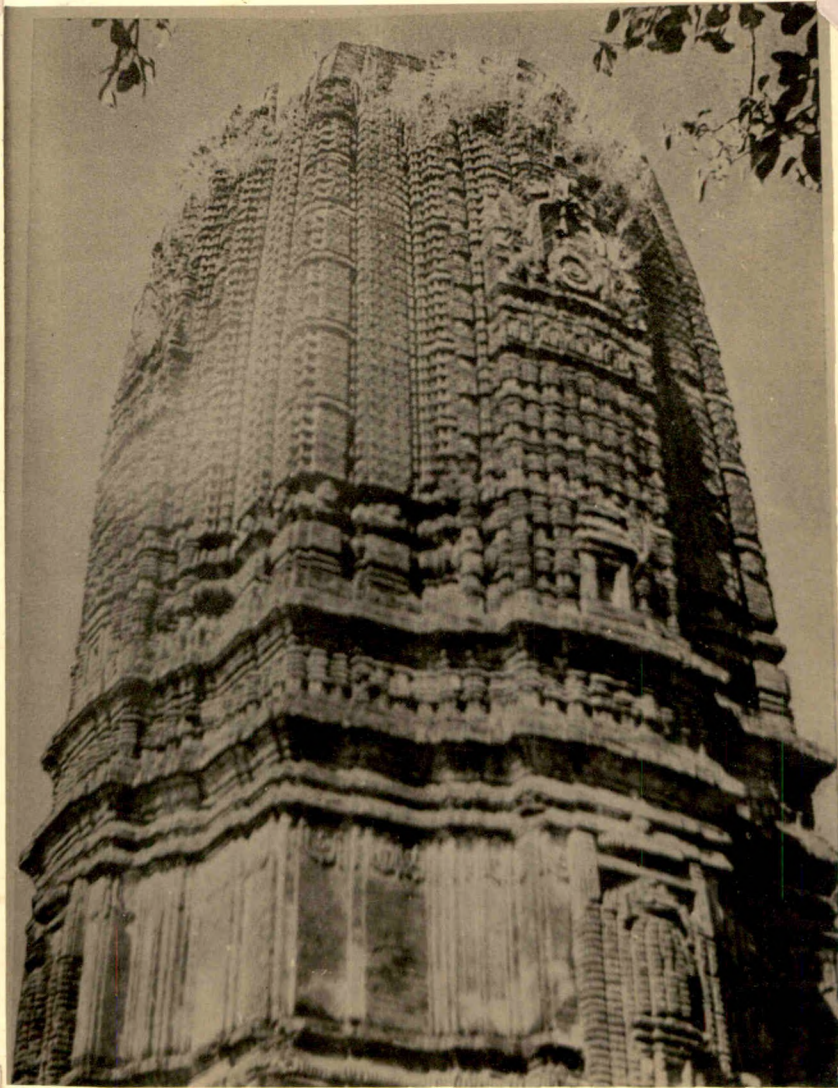
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The tower of the brick temple of Siva at Bahulārā,
7.2 K.M. north east of ondāgrām (Railway Station)
on the Kharagpur - Adrā section, S.E. Rly. Built
in or about the 11th century and richly decorated
with plastered terracotta embellishments, it is considered
by experts as an outstanding product of Indian
temple architecture.



CHAPTER - III

AGRARIAN CONDITIONS IN BISHNUPUR ESTATES

(a) The period from 1760-1780:-

(A period of experiment)

In 1757, the commencement of the British Raj in Bengal marked a turning point in the history of Mallabhum. The military campaigns of the Bargis, the Nawabs and the Company's officers over the forest tracts of Bishnupur and other parts of Bengal, the hesistant revenue experiments affecting economic conditions of the general people and the cultural splendour of the Bhum rajas of the Jungle-Mahals and Bishnupur became a story of the past. In the agrarian relations a static condition prevailed. During the reign of Shah Suja with the price rise due to fluctuations in the value and supply of silver the economic condition of the region more or less remained the same as there was no change in the production relations or in the production organisations. Apart from any improvement in the technique of production and agricultural implements which were mainly indigenous in character, agriculture in Bishnupur remained largely stationary.¹

Following Ascoli (in his Early Revenue history of Bengal and the Fifth Report, 1812) the early British

period in the area under review may be conveniently divided into three distinct phases.^{1(a)} The first phase, terminating with the Famine of 1772 was the period of hesitation and expansion. Since 1773 with the promulgation of Regulating Act in the period of experiment, the five year farming system was introduced in the field of revenue administration. In 1785 Warren Hastings left India and after that Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in the third phase of determination.² The defects in the Decennial Settlement hoodwinked the landed aristocrats and impoverished the original tillers of the soil. It reached the climax and found expression in the chuar rebellion of 1798-99 when the Company's Government followed the policy of resumption of all rent-free lands, setting aside the age-old customs, law and order,³ for strengthening the administrative system of the area the Government in 1805 created the district of Jungle Mahals, but the district was parcelled out among the neighbouring states in 1833.⁴

Since 1751 the zamindars were enjoying socio-economic privileges 'as the wardens of the marches'. Alivardi Khan's peace treaty with the Marathas to save Bengal from further Bargir invasions resulted in an agreeable term to pay twelve lakhs of rupees (By the Nawab) annually as chauth.⁵ Such action of the Nawab paved the way for the establishment of maratha political supremacy in Orissa and

the neighbouring tracts of the Bengal Presidency.⁶ In March, 1760 Ali Gauhar (Shah Alam II) aided by the Marathas under Shew Bhatt invaded Bengal. Shew Bhatt with his military detachments marched forward to Khirpai and Bishnupur⁷. The Raja of Bishnupur, Chaitanya Singh, a pious Vaisnava as he was, entrusted the administration to his minister Kamal Biswas and retired to religious meditation. The minister became quite unpopular for his extortion over the people and Damodar Singh, the younger brother(cousin) of Raja Chaitanya Singh put forth his claims to the throne. Chaitanya Singh finding no way to escape fled away to Calcutta with his family idol 'Madan Mohan' and sold the idol to Gokul Mitra of Baghbazar in order to buy the support of Diwan Ganga Govinda Singh for being reinstated by the Company. From Nawab Mir Qasim, the Company, in the meanwhile received the right of revenue collection of the districts of Burdwan and Midnapore in October, 1760.⁸ In 1765, however, the Company got the Diwani Sanad from Shah Alam II. This is an illustration of the Nawab's policy of appeasing a superior power by granting territorial concessions.⁹

After 1760, the Company faced the problem of effective collection of land revenue and the problem of the determination of the ownership over the soil. The time was not ripe for such a commercial Company's Government to establish direct relations with the original producers by

setting aside the intermediaries from the production sector.¹⁰ However, in 1761 the Company's Government began to frame regulations for collection of revenue of which they had very little or no knowledge.¹¹ Therefore, for nearly two decades, the Company's Government failed to reach a final decision as to how the land revenue could be collected effectively from the ryots and whether the proprietary right of the Zamindars would be recognised. Such hesitation on the part of the Government touched ^{The political horizon of the country giving rise} to protests from the Zamindars ^{as well as} and the farmers after 1761. The Zamindars were prevented¹² from collecting extra-imposts except land-tax. The rent free lands were gradually resumed and the rate of land settlement with the Zamindars had been increased to meet the pressing demands from England and the heavy expenses of war in India. The Zamindars, apprehensive of increased jumma always tried to win over the Qanungos by giving them farms at reduced rate. This situation led to the abolition of the Qanungos' department but it was restored in 1774 with reduced authority.

After the acquisition of the Diwani in 1765, the Company tried to maintain law and order against maratha incursions in order to safeguard their interests.

The policy of the Company's Government for enhancing the rate of land revenue of the Zamindars may be illustrated with the help of the following table. This table

would illustrate the increase in the amount of revenue payable to the Raja of Bishnupur:

1586	Sicca	Rs.107,000	(The Ain-I-Akbari)
1715	Sicca	Rs.129,803	(Jamma Kameil Tummari)
1769	Sicca	Rs.250,501	(Fergusson)
1771	Sicca	Rs.479,66-15-16	
1776	Sicca	Rs.522,817-3-0	

Such over-assessment led to the discontent of the Zamindars culminating in their revolts to defy the British rule. The revolts of the Zamindars of Ghatsila, Mayurbhanj, Boygri pargana, Barabhum, Singbhum etc. might be cited as examples.

In the mid-18th century, military operations undertaken by the Nawabs' troops, the Marathas and the Company's battalions, accompanied by economic drain in the shape of revenue - receipts and natural calamity turned the Bishnupur estates and the adjoining territories into a land of poverty. As a result of the great famine of 1770 there was enormous rise in the prices of grain. The labour class died in large numbers. Many of them fled to the Maratha districts with the expectation of cheap-corn and rent-free lands.¹³ The country side became depopulated. Non-resident cultivators were encouraged to resume lands at a cheaper rate. The Company's servants monopolised the grain trade and they

even compelled the defaulters to sell their rice at a cheap rate. In spite of the hardship suffered by the general people, the revenues were collected with utmost severity.¹⁴ In 1770, however, Cartier advocated for the remission of land tax in view of the prevailing famine condition. The Company's decision to stand forth as Diwan and introduction of the confused system of five-years farming experiment proved disastrous to the Zamindars as well as the ryots. Because over-assessment became the noticeable feature of this new system. There was general discontent in the minds of the Zamindars and the ryots which ultimately forced them to the path rebellion.

(b) Agrarian disturbances after 1780:-

The plunder let loose by the English merchants caused wide spread discontent in the country leading to a number of revolts in this region. During the 80's of the 18th century Bishnupur became a place of unrest and anarchy. The economic condition of the original producers became precarious. The Zamindar's tax-agents followed utmost oppression in the collection of revenue.

The ryots of Bishnupur named Bhgbut Surma, Nemoy Surma, Dost Mohomad, Jeerharam chund in a petition to the committee of Revenue in 1781 made complaints against Raja Chaitanya Singh and his men. They stated that the Raja claimed an additional tax of Rs.2/- per house in addition

to the usual taxes they used to pay. On refusal of the Ryots to fullfil the demand of the Raja, peons were sent to every villages. They sold the goods, cattles and houses of many ryots, confined their wives and childrens. The Zamindar's men also cut down their mango-and palm-tress and stole, their grass and took fishes out of their tanks. They complained to Rajah Chaitanya Singh against such torture and oppression. But their complaints remained unheard. For such violent activities of the Zamindar's men, a great number of the ryots had deserted, by which means the Government suffered a great loss. The ryots in their petition prayed for justice. The Committee, however, ordered the Dewan to enquire into the matter and to report accordingly. 15(a)

In another petition to the Board of Revenue Lall Mohan Roy and others, inhabitants of Baliatore in Bishnupur, complained against the arbitrary proceedings of ^{Dewan} ~~Dewan~~ Ram connye Cor (in 1790) exacting collections from several sundry Mahals, and Mohatran lands which were released from assessment. Their petition was forwarded to the collector of Birbhom for enquiry. The Board also informed the collector that such exactions on rent-free lands are illebe^d and directed him to instruct Heilbrige, Assistant Collector, to discontinue the collection made from the ryots by the Zamindars and to submit on

the validity of the tiles by which the holders of the land claim a right thereto.^{15(b)}

The people in general ruined by the havoc of famine and dispossessed by revenue agents, were thrown into country side as roving bands living by plunder and ~~extorting~~^{extorting} blackmail on the surrounding villages. One Rudra Bauri with the Dhalbhum people plundered the inhabitants of Bishnupur.¹⁶ There the faujdar was overpowered. The official letters of correspondence contained graphic picture of the disturbances which took place after 1780. Disturbances broke out in Balarampur, Karnagarh and also in the Zamindari of Panchet. In November, 1782, an army was sent to Jhalda to tackle the situation¹⁷ in Panchet. The Governor-General and the Council were anxious at this time to avoid any heavy engagements with the rebel leaders and to focus their energy in crushing Tipu Sultan and the French bid for supremacy in India through Mysore. They naturally temporised, and fell back upon the policy of diplomacy in order to detach the new owners of land, offering them pattas by uprooting the hereditary but impoverished peasant militia from the 'nankar' lands. This was done with a view to increasing crop production and the simultaneous revenue collection which was urgently needed in the war-fronts of India. The Zamindars of Simlapal and neighbouring estates,

suspended the revenue payment and instigated the ryots to rise against the Company's Government. The British ^{finally somehow,} Government crushed the power of Tipu in ^{1784 (Second Anglo-Mysore war)} 1794. They were now free to handle the rebellion of Jungle chiefs effectively. Eighteen military chiefs or naiks were forced to surrender and were sent to Calcutta for trial.

In June 1781, Ram Mohan Ray, 'Sezewal' of Bishnupur could not collect taxes from Rajhat and according to his prayer L. Mercer, Judge of the Diwani Adalat at Rajhat was asked to station sepoy at the place to prevent robberies and other acts of violence, otherwise, no revenue could be collected. Thus by the 80's of the 18th century Judges of the Diwani Adalat took over the faujdari obligations concerning revenue administration setting aside the rights of the Zamindars and the collectors. This step was taken to weaken the Zamindars, and at last to wipe them out of the production-sector.

In the midst of chaos and turmoil Warren Hastings left India for England and his successor Cornwallis followed the policy of centralisation and determination regarding agrarian problems. In 1786, Bishnupur and Birbhum were placed under separate Collectorships but after one year in 1787, two districts were united in the interest of economy. Pye who was placed in charge of Bishnupur in April, 1786 left the united districts of Birbhum-Bishnupur

in April 1787, on transfer. Sherburne came in place of Pye and transferred the Capital from Bishnupur to Suri in Birbhum. He was, however, discharged in November, 1787 under suspicion of corrupt dealings and was succeeded by Christopher Keating. In 1789, Chaitanya Singh, the Raja of Bishnupur was thrown into prison for arrears of land-revenue. His subjects immediately began to revolt. Birbhum came under the control of the insurgents.¹⁸

In July, 1788, the 'Mandals' assembled a number of ryots and incited them into an insurrection vowing that they would not submit to the 'Jumabandy'. The Company's Government threatened the Zamindar of Bishnupur with dispossession of his estate if the arrear was not paid within three days. In October 1788, the insurgents ransacked the treasury. In February, 1789, the hillmen broke through the cordon of outposts, created panic in the neighbourhood. The peace-loving cultivators also joined their hands with the dispossessed and disgruntled chuars. In November 1789, the position of the Government became precarious. Rajnagar fell into the hands of the insurgents. Bishnupur and Birbhum witnessed complete suspension of British rule. But from 1790 the diplomatic dealings of the Company's Government proved effective. To save harvest the paikhast ryots stood against the dispossessed ryots.

The peasantry soon came to realise their own fault. They soon entered into sharp conflicts with the rebels whom they had welcomed a year before. The peasants joined their hands with the Government in putting down the rebellion successfully. The wave of this revolt also touched the neighbouring areas of Panchet, Bogri and ^{Bhanj}abhurn.

The period of pre-permanent settlement which was marked by over-assessment¹⁹ aimed at maximisation of revenue and security of annual collection from the production sector. This period witnessed increased oppression of the Zamindari amlas and Sardar tahsildars over the ryots under which the Zamindar's Paternalism was thrown into the background. The permanent settlement created several intermediaries whose pressure was felt heavy over the ryots. One of the important results of the Permanent Settlement was the appearance of the Pattani tenure.

(c) Pattani and other kinds of land-tenures:-

Raja Tej Chand of Burdwan who bought the estates of Bishnupur created under-tenures known as Patni Taluks and began to lease out the holdings to the Pattanidars of Bishnupur for proper realisation of revenue who would be willing to pay revenue directly to the Government.²⁰ The Patni tenure was in effect a lease which bound his holder by the same terms and conditions as those by which the

superior land-lord was bound to the state.

By Regulation XLIV of 1793, the Proprietor of an estate was allowed to grant lease for a period of ten years but this provision was rescinded by section 2 of Regulation V of 1812. By Regulations XVIII of the same year, proprietors were declared competent to grant leases for any period, even in perpetuity. In the preamble to Regulation VIII of 1819, it was decided that the Zamindars were free to grant taluks or other leases of their lands, fixing the rent in perpetuity, at their discretion, subject to the liability of their being annulled, as ^{sale} ~~sale~~ of the lessor's estate for arrears of Government revenue. A Patni taluk may thus be described as a tenure created by the Zamindar to be held by the lessee and his heirs for ever at a rent fixed in perpetuity. As the Bishnupur estate was sold out to the Maharaja of Burdwan at an enhanced jumma it resulted in the paik upsurge under the Raja of Bishnupur and the collection of rent was totally suspended.²¹

In pursuance of these Regulations Patni taluks came into existence also in the Zamindari other than that of Burdwan. The Patni sale law²² provided by the Regulation VIII of 1819 was beneficial to the Zamindars who had leased out their estates in Patni taluks.

The Collectors were empowered to sell Patni taluks in arrears twice in every year, in consultation with the Zamindars. By the same Regulation the Patni taluks were declared hereditary, transferable and valid in perpetuity, and patnidars were entitled to create under-tenures known as Dar-patni. Dar-Patni was subordinate to patni tenure and was created by the patnidar. It was tenure in perpetuity, transferable and hereditary and conferred on its holders the same rights and privileges as that of a patnidar holding land direct from a Zamindar. By Regulation VIII, 1819 Section 13,²³ the under-tenure holders were allowed to save their tenures by paying into the Collectors' office the arrear of rent due to the Zamindar. Se-patni or patni of a third degree was also a taluk, the holder of which had the same rights and privileges as a dar-patnidar or a patnidar. A Se-patni taluk was again subordinate to a Dar-patni.

W.W.Hunter described different kinds of land-tenures based on the report of Ratan Lal, Ghosh, Deputy Collector in March 1783:

1. Tenures held directly from Government
2. Intermediate tenures
3. Cultivating tenures
4. Service tenures
5. Rent-free tenures.

Among intermediate tenures mention may be made to:-

1. patni taluks with their subordinate tenures viz. Darpatni and Se-patni
2. Mukarrari taluks
3. Istimrafi
4. Zar-I-pashgi-ijara
5. Dar-ijara

So far as the tenures held directly from the Government are concerned the Zamindars were included in it. It included all lakheraj tenures-subsequently resumed and settled by Government, the service tenures held at quit-rent, the Ghatwali estates and Shikmi estates. According to Hunter, Shikmi estate were created by the Government at the settlement of the resumed lakheraj villages. The revenue of these estates was paid to the Government through the proprietors of the villages in which they are situated.

W.W.Hunter, also holds the opinion that most of the Mukarrari taluks which had been in existence before the Decennial settlement were almost all abolished. The Mukarrari taluks were subsequently created by the Zamindars or talukdars.

They had definite rights expressed in the written engagements by which they are created. Their rents were not subject to enhancement but they were saleable for arrears. Unless the hereditary nature of the tenure could be

inferred in the language used in the lease, a mukarrari tenure was considered to be valid during the life time of the tenant ^{and to terminate with his death. If it was made} only ~~made~~ hereditary in the lease then only it turned into a hereditary right. ~~The lessee paid a bonus or salami for the murned into a hereditary right.~~ The lessee paid a bonus or salami for the mukarrari tenure. Dar-mukarraris were tenures created by the makarraridars.

Ijara~~s~~ were leases granted in respect of a piece of land, according to which a definite amount of rent became payable annually during a specified term. On the expiry of the lease, no matter for how long it had been in existence, the ijaradar was not entitled to its renewal. He could not give up the lease without the consent of the lessor nor could ^{The} ~~be~~ lessor increase the rent so long the lease remained in force. A dar ijara was subordinate to an ijaradar.

The zar-i-peshgi-ijara was another form of ijara or lease. It might be granted for an indefinite term of years and made terminable on certain conditions. Such kind of leases came into fore^{front} ~~front~~ when a talukdar or tenant mortgaged his estate as a security for a loan. The term would usually expire when a mortgage~~had~~ recovered the amount of debt and interests from the proceeds of the property.

So far as patni tenure is concerned, the system ensured perpetuation of interests of the Zamindars. The patnidars could raise rents, resume unauthorized rent-free

lands, distrain and attach lands for balances. Sometimes the Zamindars were themselves leaseholders of others estates. The Board of Revenue became suspicious of the motive of the Maharaja of Burdwan as he was willing to purchase taluks in fictitious names to make fresh settlements with the original producers to increase rent.²⁴ With that end in view an Enquiry Committee was set up by the Governor-General-in-Council in May 1819 under the leadership of H.R. Princep, Superintendent Remembrancer of Legal Affairs.²⁵ The system also gave right to the Patnidars to alienate their rights wholly or partly to dar-patnidars. Thus the creation of a long chain of intermediaries though ensured the collection of maximum rent, but its pressure was heavily felt both by the old Zamindars as well as by the original producers with or without occupancy rights over the lands. That the sub-infeudation was oppressive to the ryot was also admitted by the Raja of Burdwan, as it was only productive of losses, fraud and inconvenience.²⁶ The Collector of Burdwan's report contained the idea that the original producers were heavily assessed as a consequence of sub-infeudation and as such criminal prosecutions were made.²⁷ The Board of Directors in their letter of February 2, 1819 advised Fleming, Collector of Burdwan that the rights of the Ryots should be clearly defended.²⁸ To protect the interests of the original producers the Government wanted the Zamindars to grant pattas

to the ryots. The patni tenure was legalised by the Regulation VIII of September, 1819 by which the holdings of the ryots could not be attached and cancelled for arrears.²⁹ But the recorded instances are quite absent as to show how far in practice ^{the} ~~these~~ pattani regulations were successful to protect the interest of the original producers. The increasing pressure of population, withering away of domestic industries due to lack of capital and market facilities and of all tillage rights whether of property or of occupancy, ultimately led to the inevitable consequences i.e. pauperisation of the original producers and ~~de~~jectment of the land-holders from their estates.

So far as the cultivating tenures are concerned, W.W. Hunter found the actual cultivators under different conditions. Holdings held by cultivators, were generally known as Jama or Jot. ^{Jama or Jot} ~~These~~ were held without any kind of written engagement. The land remained in the possession of one family from generation to generation and in many cases without a document of title. By the custom of the district, a resident or non-resident ryot was allowed to hold his lands undisturbed, so long as he paid the rent together with the fixed or occasional cesses (abwabs) to his landlord, but where his immediately superior landlord is anijaradar with only a temporary lease, the relations were more strained. An ordinary Jama could only be sold with the

permission of the superior holder who might refuse to register the name of a purchaser thereof in his records unless the sale took place with his consent or unless it was subsequently ratified by him. This consent or ratification might be secured in two ways:- firstly, by payment of a bonus or Salami and secondly, by the recognition of the purchaser's occupation on the part of the Zamindar or his agent by receiving rent from him and granting him receipt. When the Jama was sold in by a civil court in satisfaction of a decree, the purchaser became the ryot whether his name was enlisted in the Zamindar's records or not.

Some cultivators also held land under what was known as Miadi Jama. A miadi Jama could be held for a fixed term of years under a patta or lease.

A cultivator could not relinquish his tenure before the expiry term without the knowledge or consent of his superior land-holder nor could the superior tenure-holder enhance the rent or eject the cultivator before the term of the lease expired.

Another form of right under which cultivators held land was known as Jangal bari Jama. When waste lands were leased out for the purpose of being cleared of jungle and brought under cultivation, the tenure was known as jungle bari. Such lands were assessed at

progressive rate of rents payable after a certain number of years during which no rent was paid. The rights of these cultivators were of a permanent nature.

Some of the cultivators used to hold lands under leases which were known as Mukarrari and maurusi. The rent of these lands was subject neither to enhancement nor to abatement. The tenure was hereditary in nature. Salami or bonus had to be paid by the tenant at the time of the creation of these Jamas. But some cultivators held lands under mukarrari rights only, which meant that they held their lands in terms of a definite lease but without the right of heritability whereas maurusi tenures were heritable. When a lease created a jamma transmissible to the children and grandchildren of the lessee and at the same time reserved the grantor's power of assessing any land that might after the execution of the lease, be found in excess of the specified area, the Jama was known as a simple maurusi one.

The right created by an ordinary cultivator was called Korfa. The holder although a cultivator of the land did not acquire the right of occupancy. Korfa tenancy was generally created verbally.

Bhag jot was the arrangement under which the tenant had to use the husbandman's land for a year or a

season and paid as rent certain share of the produce of the land. Ordinarily one half of the produce was so paid.

So far as the service-tenures are concerned, apart from the Ghatwali lands there were following service lands in 1845 in the pargana of Bishnupur. The holders of these lands had to perform certain specified duties in lieu of enjoying the produce of the lands.

1. Senapati Mahal - These lands were assigned for the support of Commanding Officers (Senapati) of the army.
2. Mahal-Bera-Mahal - Lands assigned to the guards of Bishnupur fort.
3. Chharidari Mahal - Lands granted to the Raja's mace-bearers.
4. Bakshi Mahal - Lands assigned to the Bakshis or military pay masters.
5. Kasta bhandar Mahal - Lands assigned to the suppliers of fuels to the Raja's Palace.
6. Shagirdi Pesha Mahal - Lands granted to the private servants of the Raja
7. Krot Mahal - Lands assigned to the court officials of the Raja such as, diwan etc.
8. Topkhana Mahal - Lands assigned to the gunners.

-167-

9. Dom-Mahal - Lands held by the drummers and musicians.
10. Kaharan Mahal - Lands assigned to the palanquin-bearers.
11. Khatali Mahal - Lands granted to the coolies or labourers in the fort.
12. Hatila Mahal - Lands on which markets were held at Bishnupur.
13. Be-talab Mahal - Lands granted by the Raja for charitable and religious purposes.

Rent-free tenures were known by different names such as Brahmottar, Sivottar, Devottar, etc, income from the land being meant for the support of a Brahmin or the temple of Siva or a temple generally or as pirattar, ⁱchragur etc. where the grantees were muslims.

F.W.Robertson, the Settlement Officer of the District of Bankura during 1917-24 settlement operations, also recorded some peculiar features in the land tenure system of the Jungle-Mahals. Mention may be made to two such peculiar tenancies: (1) The langal chas, (2) The Jal-sason.

Christopher Keating fixed the rates of rent for resumed lakheraj lands in 1792. These rates were known as Keating's nirikhnama. These varied from Rs.2.00 to Rs.3.00

per bigha for ordinary paddy (Sali) lands and from Rs.5.00 to Rs.7.00 for two-cropped (Suna) lands. F.W. Robertson, however, argued that the average incidence of rent (even in 1917-24) for the whole district was very much lower than that for other districts. The average of rent per acre for the whole district in 1917-24 was Rs.1-12 anns -7p

In the langal chas system rent was assessed on the plough at the rate of 8 as. to Rs.1.00 per plough. The idea being that there was a relation between the area cultivated and the number of plough in the possession of that tenant. In the jal-sasan tenancies which were mainly to be found in the hilly tracts of the Jungle-Mahals comprising modern northern and central Bankura, settlement-holders under stipulation of a charter from the proprietors were obliged to irrigate and to bring lands under tillage for no rent or for a nominal rent for a particular period. Sometimes settlement of a portion of large area of waste land was made with the Jal-Sasan tenant for his own cultivation and the remainder was settled with outsiders. Resumption of rent-free lands and increase in the population gave an acceleration to bring waste lands in the mid-land plains and hilly regions of the Jungle-Mahals under cultivation through these two types of land-settlements.

(d) The period from 1793 to 1833:-

(A Study of the changes in the Agrarian economy and the Agrarian Relations):-

The sporadic outbreaks of the agrarian disturbances after 1781 were largely due to the decline of Nizamat, inadequate Thanadari system, economic crisis arising out of complete suppression of the inland trade subsisting between Bengal and Orissa, gradual pauperisation of the independent peasantry leading to rapid transplantation of population and the Company's revenue experiments. The root of such agrarian discontents did not, however, lie only in the question of enhancement of rent. The cause lies also in the tendency of the landlords to tamper with the tenant's right of occupancy.³⁰ Such agrarian disturbances paved the way for the outbreak of the chuar Rebellion of 1799 for which the Regulations of the Permanent Settlement were largely responsible. The post Permanent Settlement period witnessed a fast decline not only in the status of the propertied classes but of the original producers as well. The agrarian set up in 1793 is best described in the words of Ilbert - "A revenue payer, we found the Zamindar, a rent receiver we made him - not a landlord in the English sense whose rent represents interest on capital which has been expended on farm buildings, drainage and the like.... The legislation of 1793 left the ryot's right outstanding and

underdefined and by so leaving them it tended to obscure them, to efface them and in many cases to destroy them." Several references might be made to the disturbances in Bishnupur after the post-settlement period which were definitely the outcome of agrarian discontent. Reference may be made to the disturbances created in Singhazari, Bishnupur, as reported by Hesilbrige, Assistant Collector in 1790.^{30(a)}

The Acting Magistrate of Burdwan in 1799 transmitted a letter from Lt. Spottiswood (command in Bishnupur) and reported on the disturbances in Bishnupur.³¹ The Magistrate of Burdwan while reporting on the further disturbances on March, 1799 recommended that the family of Chaitanya Singh was to be called in to Burdwan and he intended to proceed to Bishnupur to ascertain the nature of such disturbances.³² Lt. Spottiswood informed the Board of the severe state of the banditti there.³³ The recurrence of such disturbances on several occasions compelled the magistrate to suggest to the Board to make an early attempt to put down the rebellion.³⁴ Under such circumstances a special military attachment was sent under captain Morrison to put down the revolt in Bishnupur.³⁵

But again in the year 1808 such agrarian revolts started afresh, which drew the attention of the court of Directors. Several persons were punished in the criminal courts for such offences.^{35(a)}

Agriculture in Bengal was static with indigenous technique of production. The methods of water supply which constituted the foundation of all agricultural operations were meagre. The ill-kept embankments often damaged the rice crop. In the preceding period with the negation of hereditary rights of the Zamindars over the soil, the problem of repairing and maintaining embankments came to the forefront and it was found that the Company's Government before the 90's of the century was slow to take over the responsibility.³⁶ The Zamindars could not even procure advance from the Government for the repair of embankments.³⁷ A more liberal policy on the part of the Government could have saved the situation. At a later period we find that the peasants could not construct wells or tanks for irrigation purposes without the prior consent of the Zamindars, who discouraged these as far as possible apprehending that they would result in the consolidation of peasant's occupancy rights.³⁸ In view of the smallness of the margin of profit from agricultural commodities, the peasants were also generally not enthusiastic about the constructions of new wells or tanks, unless they were indispensable.

More or less unchanged technique of cultivation resulted in the agricultural production at a lower rate. It is ~~also~~^{most} true to say that static level of agricultural production, is the characteristic mark of a peasant community

of the period. "In a real subsistence economy, it can almost be taken as a ^{law} of nature that agricultural production will increase at about the same rate as population".³⁹ The decline of population due to the famine of 1770 adversely affected production. At a later period, in the absence of any considerable scope for the extension of cultivation, the growth of labour power beyond a point where the input of additional units of labour would not result in increasing the total farm output would tend to reduce per capita income in the peasant families.⁴⁰

In Bengal the peasants constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. The general trends in increase or decrease of population represented the trends in the increase or decrease of the peasant population. Apart from natural calamities, the higher death rate caused by epidemic fever, variously known as the Burdwan fever or the Hugli fever (throughout the second half of the 19th century) deeply affected the agrarian society. Such epidemic fevers considerably decimating the working population and draining off the vitality of the survivors immediately reacted on agriculture. Scarcity of labour was a common phenomenon in the fever-stricken districts. "Families which were full of robust, working heads and could very well spare many of them from their own fields to work for others, can now scarcely supply labour adequate to cultivate their own lands".⁴¹

A considerable decline in cultivation naturally resulted, but official reports do not provide us with detailed statistics for ascertaining its extent. It is also difficult to measure the growth of population in absence of any systematic statistical data before 1872. After 1833, a large northern portion of the Midnapore district was ceded to the district of Bankura. However, no informations about the area of Bankura before 1872 was given in the official sources. There were frequent changes in the jurisdiction of the districts of Midnapur and Jungle Mahals now mainly comprising the Bankura district.

In 1871 census, the total population estimated in the district of Bankura at 526,772 and the pressure of population on the soil being 391 persons per Sq.mile.⁴²

Since 1803, the Company's Government began to resume rent-free lands of different categories. viz., Ghatwali and Paikan lands etc; and constant vigilance was exercised to transfer settled lands on non-revenue paying lands for religious purposes. In doubtful cases lands were escheated, in lieu of money-allowance and that prompted the tendency of movement towards non-settled frontiers in the coastal region, mainly on the newly-emerged soil by the river banks. Settlements were even made in the hilly and forest infested waste lands of the Jungle-Mahals. The transformation of barren and other rent-free lands into

settled cultivable lands under the emigrants enhanced Government revenue and prompted the people to emigrate to the neighbouring unsettled tracts. Increased agricultural works thus suffered to a great extent from paucity of available labour-personnel. The increase in tropical diseases owing to lack of proper sanitation in drainage system arisen out of water-logging embankments⁴³ The wage-earners were poorly

paid. Such poor wages discouraged the land less labourers from forming permanent stations in the frontier regions.⁴⁴

Moreover, inadequate supply of daily necessities of life led to rise in prices.⁴⁵ The Governmental tendency of converting daily wages into payment on contract basis, could not however, check the flight of labourers to a more inaccessible regions in the coastal belt.⁴⁶

^{flight of}
The ~~first~~ labourers was also due to replacement of produce-rent by money rent in the mode of payment. The tenancies paying produce rent fell into two ^{distinct classes,} ~~distinct~~ viz.,

classes: Sanja and Bhag⁴⁷ The permanent settlement which led to the conversion of produce-rent into fixed money rents aroused a tendency to evade tax payments by flight to the neighbouring rent-free lands of Orissa. But since 1803 the extension of British frontier checked such tendencies to a great extent. After 1803, in the countryside the disguised unemployed as well as overburdened borrowers found agencies of work and escape from unlimited liabilities of the money-

lenders in the newly resumed non-revenue paying lands. The revenue records are full of illustrations as to how the system of advance which was necessary for the cultivators for cultivating their lands tended to take the shape of usury making it impossible for the ryots to get out of the clutches of the money-lenders.

The increasing role of different types of money-lenders also played an important role in the agrarian economy of the region under review.

The cases of local money-lenders consisting of rich cultivators, the foreign money-lenders who were mainly the up-country merchants and the role of advance made by the Company's Government in the cotton and silk-textile producing areas of Bishnupur through the Agents were to be considered in this context.

The rural credit network developed and intensified in response to the increasing dependence of ryots and Zamindars on money lenders for payment of revenue.

Debts were incurred by peasants mainly for
(1) Payment of the rent of the Zamindars and the land-revenue of the Government.

(2) Payment of the old debts, and interest,

(3) Maintenance of the family until the next harvest,

(4) Litigation on account of land claims and unavoidable social ceremonies like marriage etc, and (5) purchase of agricultural stock, such as seeds, cattle and implements. It is however, certain that productive borrowings for purchase of agricultural stock represented a small ^{proportion} ~~proportion~~ of the total rural debt since the portion of capital itself was small in the total agricultural inputs. The annual interest payable on this debt was most commonly at the rate of 37½ percent.^{47(a)} The lower rural credit agencies had to depend on the higher agencies to meet the heavy demand for rural credit. The large majority of village Mahajans had to depend on urban money-lenders for funds and the urban money lenders had also to depend, on other money lenders, indigenous bankers and commercial banks.^{47(b)} The British officials and administrators, while condemning the exploitative character of the rural credit system, were actually conscious of the dependence of Government revenues on money-lending operations.^{47(c)}

"A rustic money lender, reported one District officer from Burdwan, was generally a successful cultivator, and a cultivator if he was successful and had saved a little money became almost as a matter of course a money lender".^{47(d)}

Though the majority of both creditors and debtors were cultivators, land transfer from agricultural to money lending classes could not be a wide spread phenomenon.

It might have been argued that the narrow size of the market for agricultural produce, restricted by the poverty of the rural masses were at the root of backward character of Bengal agriculture.^{47(e)} Economic expansion largely depended on the domestic market for agricultural and industrial products. In the absence of rapid industrialisation, the urban market for agricultural products in the period under review underwent virtually no expansion. The ratio between urban and rural population remained practically unchanged, and the rural market for grain was constrained by the poverty of the majority of villagers.^{47(f)}

The original producers of the soil who could not resist the usurious claims of these creditors nor could escape by flying away to other countries gradually ruined. The Indian servants of the Company also carried on the business of money-lending at a high rate of interest to enhance their fortune.⁴⁸

The decline in the economic position of the agrarian community was also a noticeable feature of Permanent Settlement. In Bishunpur, Ghatwali and other non-revenue paying tenures and uncultivated waste lands built up a section of peasantry who had land but no stock. They were dependent for production on a class of wage-earners with stock. The gradual resumption of Ghatwali and other rent-free lands granted by the Zamindars to the

people for carrying police duties, and the absence of offering alternative job-opportunities to them guided them to the path of poverty and sufferings.⁴⁹ Moreover, the enforcement of ruthless distraint regulations and sometimes forced sale of peasant's movable and immovable properties at a nominal price created havoc in the life of agrarian community.⁴⁹ The prevalence of Gang-robbery and depredations also resulted in economic disaster for the country. The cattle and seeds of the peasantry were the major victims of depredation carried on by the Zamindar of Bishnupur and discharged militia captains or sardars of different Mahals.⁵⁰

The general conditions of the landless day and seasonal wage-earners was precarious. As a result of usurious advance, in some cases, compulsion exercised upon this class of ryots reduced them almost to servitude without any independence to change their masters.⁵¹ Many of them saved their life by ~~flying~~^{fleeing} to the adjoining maratha territories before 1803.

The rapid demographic changes in the region were due to increasing public works in irrigation and embankments, roads and public buildings, as well as in military manoeuvring demanded rapid labor mobilisation. But due to poor money-wages they could not settle in their new settlement. They fled away to the coastal region of Midnapur and Orissa.⁵²

The causes of the agrarian disturbances in the 19th century were, therefore largely due to the decline in the status of the propertied class as well as of the original producers. They were social, economic, as well as psychological.

The Company's investments in trade and Village-level industries

Besides revenue settlements and administrative reforms in gradual degrees the Company's Government was also mindful for investment in trade and commerce. A large sum of revenue they invested in commercial undertakings. While Keating was the Collector of Bishnupur-Birbhum, John Cheap was the Commercial Resident.⁵³ The important products were silk, cotton cloth, fibres, gums and lac dye.⁵⁴ The Company's business was managed under two distinct systems:

(1) by covenanted servants who received regular pay and invested any private profit, but they were allowed a percentage of commission;

(2) by unsalaried agents who contracted to supply goods at a certain rate with an option to make whatever private profits they could in the process. The commercial Resident John Cheap enjoyed the enviable privilege of carrying on an enormous business on his own account. He had 3 head factories and 12 subordinate factories under him. He used to

exercise magisterial powers and judicial authority over the producers. Being entrusted with the duty of making huge purchase for the Company he had the entire artisan classes under his complete control. This resulted in the elimination of the inter-mediaries beginning with the landed proprietors, labour procurers and Hodadars from the production sector. For a while the Company's investments succeeded in eliminating the disguised unemployment in the countryside but ruthless profiteering motive of the darogahs, Sardar-labourers and contractors in the aurungs,⁵⁵ and gradual shrinkage of the home market for the commodity productions ultimately pauperised the artisan classes.⁵⁶ It appears that in 1813 there was a head factory at Sonamukhi with 31 'aurungs' (subordinate establishments) among which were Surul and Illambazar in Birbhum district and Patrasayer in Bankura district.⁵⁷ There were also small sugar factories at Sonamukhi, Bishnupur and Patrasayer besides a large one at Surul.⁵⁸ John Cheap was appointed as Resident of the head factory at Sonamukhi in December 1797.⁵⁹

One of the important features of the agrarian economy in the mid-19th century in Bankura was the gradual commercialisation of agriculture.⁶⁰ It had its impact felt on the existing production organisation and affected the productive efforts of peasants.⁶¹ In Bankura, Bishnupur and some other parts of Bengal and eastern Bihar, some Indian

landlords and European planters bought farms with thousands of acres of land at a cheap rate, replaced paddy for indigo cultivation and converted the free cultivators to a class of serfs.⁶² By Regulation VIII of 1819 the European indigo planters turned themselves ^{into the position of} Zamindars. They as money-lenders used to pay usurious advance to the cultivators which could never be returned owing to their ignorance about fictitious book-keeping of the concerned Accountants.⁶³ The cultivators were subjected to inhuman labour and even to physical torture by the 'amlas', accountants and planters.

The original producers preferred to flee away from villages on account of economic and physical torture. Moreover, water-logging embankments and indifference of the planters to improve Village sanitation and public health led leading to rapid spread of malaria and other tropical diseases,⁶⁴ ^{and} prompted the original producers to leave the villages. Since the middle of the 19th Century a new chapter was, however, opened to resist the oppression of the indigo planters by mass upsurge. The peasants themselves rose in revolt against the oppressive planters with their traditional indigenous weapons and very often they could succeed in repelling the paiks of the planters with guns and other lethal weapons. At the time of the paik disturbances in the late 18th century the ryots of Bankura offered a stiff resistance against the indigo cultivation and conversion of the

of the paddy lands for this purpose. In spite of these agrarian disturbances the general deteriorating economy of Bankura could not be improved in absence of developing industry.

Throughout the 1st half of the 19th century Bankura presented a picture of disquiet and stagnation even though the Government was not slow in revenue and administrative experiments. A study of the revenue and judicial records of the period concerning the administrative history of Bishnupur and Jungle-Mahals will explain the causes of dissatisfaction of the landed proprietors as well as of their original producers which subsequently prepared the ground for agrarian disturbances throughout the 19th century. It was the economic policy of the Company for which all sections of the community offered stiff resistance.

With the abandonment of silk and textile investment by the Company's Government, it resulted in lowering per capita income and lessened buying as well as saving capacities of the producers. The British Residents used to borrow money from the Collector as well as from Agency and Banking Houses for investment in village industries, but their half-hearted measures proved fruitless. While the Indian businessman thought it unprofitable to invest money in the production of village handicrafts. Thus the first

decade of the 19th Century witnessed a rapid decline in village industries. No concerted efforts were made either by the Company or by the Indian middlemen and richer section of population to revitalise this dying village craftsmanship.⁶⁵

The construction of embankments were entrusted to the private European contractors out of the grant made available to the Zamindars by the Government. In an instance in the Jungle-Mahals belonging to the estates of the Raja of Burdwan for the repair of the existing embankments a sum of Rs.117,000 was collected from the ryots as the poolbundi cess. Out of that amount the Company sanctioned a meagre sum of Rs.60,000 only to the Burdwan raja for the repair works. Raja Tej Chand made a contract with Foxcroft in 1794 to keep embankments repaired through the grant of Rs.44,839.00⁶⁶ The entire money was embezzled up by the contractor and his men with the result that after a heavy flood all the cultivable lands were inundated. Rani Bishnu Kumari wanted removal of Foxcroft and she wanted to hand over the responsibility of repair works to the Collectors.⁶⁷

Since 1800, the Company failed to take any firm stand in matters of poolbundy administration. The Company's Government without taking the responsibility in their own hands shifted the burden to the landed aristocracy

by making funds available to them out of the poolbundy cess realised from the ryots. The landed proprietors shifted the burden of keeping the embankments repaired in the hands of private contractors. In 1801, the Company's Government ordered the Board to instruct the collectors^{to} issue orders to the land-holders to cause the necessary repairs to be made to the embankments in their respective estates. In the event of the land holders not complying with such requisition the Board was advised to furnish with estimates of the expenses^{required} for the purpose, with their sentiments as to the manner in which the work should be executed, and at the same time apprising the land-lords that the expenses would be charged to their account.⁶⁸ In May 1799, Thomas Marriot was again placed in charge of Superintendent of poolbundy repairs (he was formerly superintendent for poolbundi repairs in 1788) and was entrusted to disburse the allocated money for construction work. His plan could not work well owing to opposition of the commercial Resident at Soonamukhi (in March 1802) as well as from the contractors.

In the rainy season, absence of adequate drainage system resulted in indiscriminate cutting of embankments by the villagers. Such acts led to inundation of a very large area of cultivable lands, heavily damaging

the immature ^{seedlings} seedlings and crops. Regulation VI (clause 6, section XII) which declared that cutting of embankments would be punishable by the criminal courts. The village chowkidars (watchman) were employed for strict vigilance over cutting of poolbundi embankments which proved fruitless.⁶⁹ In times of emergency major irrigation and drainage works were generally undertaken by the Government. The minor construction works were undertaken by the landed proprietors. In 1790, the Board of Revenue approved the appropriation of the balance of Rs. 1,690 towards the repairs to the embankments in Bishnupur.^{69(a)} In the rainy season, the problem of repair works of the over-flooded embankments used to turn into a ^{difficult} different one. There were frequent disputes between the landlords and the collectors regarding the responsibility of the repair works.⁷⁰ Moreover, with the beginning of the rainy season surplus labour could not be procured at the old money-rate.⁷¹ The rate of payment to the daily labourers ^{was} ~~were~~ very poor. According to Thomas Marriot one labourer could earn 1½ annas per day.⁷² Apart from this, the amounts assigned to the embankments were very often eaten up by the intermediaries, like the poolbundi Darogahs, the supervisors, the contractors, the labour procurers and the watchman.⁷³ ultimately the calamity of inundation fell upon the poor ryots who had to pay extra poolbundi cess to the Government exchequer.⁷⁴

In 1802, a superintendent of embankments was appointed and repair works were being carried out by the poolbundi darogahs. In 1806, the control of embankment⁷⁵ Regulations was promulgated and committees were formed with powers to call upon the Zamindars to carry out the repairs to the embankments. In 1814, the council decided to discontinue the practice of giving the embankments in contract to any individual or party⁷⁵. It was decided that the corrupt darogahs were to be removed from the poolbundi administration and the responsibility for advertising for contracts of different divisions were to be offered by the Talookdars. In 1829, the Embankment committee was replaced by the military Board. The Board though undertook different works of public utility, could not provide security to the ryots from drought and flood, ill-managed drainage system and spread of tropical diseases⁷⁶, for want of adequate fund and corruption of the intermediaries.

In this region the forestry and cattle-breeding were continuing in a narrow marginal cycle. Though the soil of the country was richer and luxuriant. But attempts were half-hearted to extract maximum production from the fertile land. The inclement weather and unfavourable monsoon very often led to inundation causing wide-spread famine.⁷⁷ In the commercial sector there was a steady decline of internal trade and village handicrafts under the fostering care

of land lord capitalists. The country was well-populated. The problem of unemployment in the rural area was acute.⁷⁸ In the absence of accurate statistical data, it is not possible to measure per-capita income here. So far as live stock is concerned, the average output, per animal of milk was much lower here in comparison to the advanced countries, because tropical grasses and other forage plants though grew in abundant were lacking in nutritive value.⁷⁹ Excessive heat of the region concerned resulted in proneness to disease and pests in these tropical countries. The high-rate of ~~cows~~ mortality was frequently occasioned by the food habits of one section of population, while no remarkable attempts were made at large scale cattle breeding.⁸⁰ The Government and the landless wage-earners did not try heartily to resume and cultivate waste-lands which were absolutely necessary for cattle raising.

The major impact of the 19th century industrial ^{-st-} Invention of the Company's Government resulted in the relative reduction in mortality rates.⁸¹ The British officers while making measures to protect themselves from malaria typhoid and other tropical diseases also protected the peasantry as well. At a later period, works of public utility ⁸² were, however, undertaken by the Government for construction of high ways, improvement of transport facilities, establishment of schools, introduction of English as a

medium of instruction etc. which indirectly marked rise in the per-capita income, and improvement in living standards of the people. But such rise in per-capita income can not be measured accurately in absence of statistical data.

The majority ~~of~~^{the} population of the area under review consisted of aboriginal elements viz, Santals. The Santali organisation as depicted by F.W. Robertson, Settlement Officer during 1917-24 in the district of Bankura, also showed a complete picture of village community in decline.⁸³ The Bhumij Revolt of 1832 in the Jungle Mahals compelled the Government for a change in administration. By the new Regulation XIII of 1833, the district of Jungle Mahal which was created in 1805 was abolished. The new regulations marked a precipitious fall in the status of the military caste belonging to the aboriginal elements viz, Lodhas, Bowries and Kols etc; who were the traditional armed militia of the country as they were deprived of both police duties and rent-free lands.⁸⁴

CHAPTER - III

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52. To H. Manning, Esq. Acting Salt Agent Hidgellie, From M. Landers, Secretary Board of Custom, Salt and Opium, ^{March,} March 28, 1825.
53. W. W. Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal, Vol. I, P. 350
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Centre	Investment	Factory charges	Total
Sonamukhi	Rs.7,53,345-10-10-0	Rs.32,048-0-14-2	Rs.7,85,393-11-4-2
Surul	Rs. 25,660-1-17-0	Rs. 2,225-0-0-0	Rs.27,885-1-17-0

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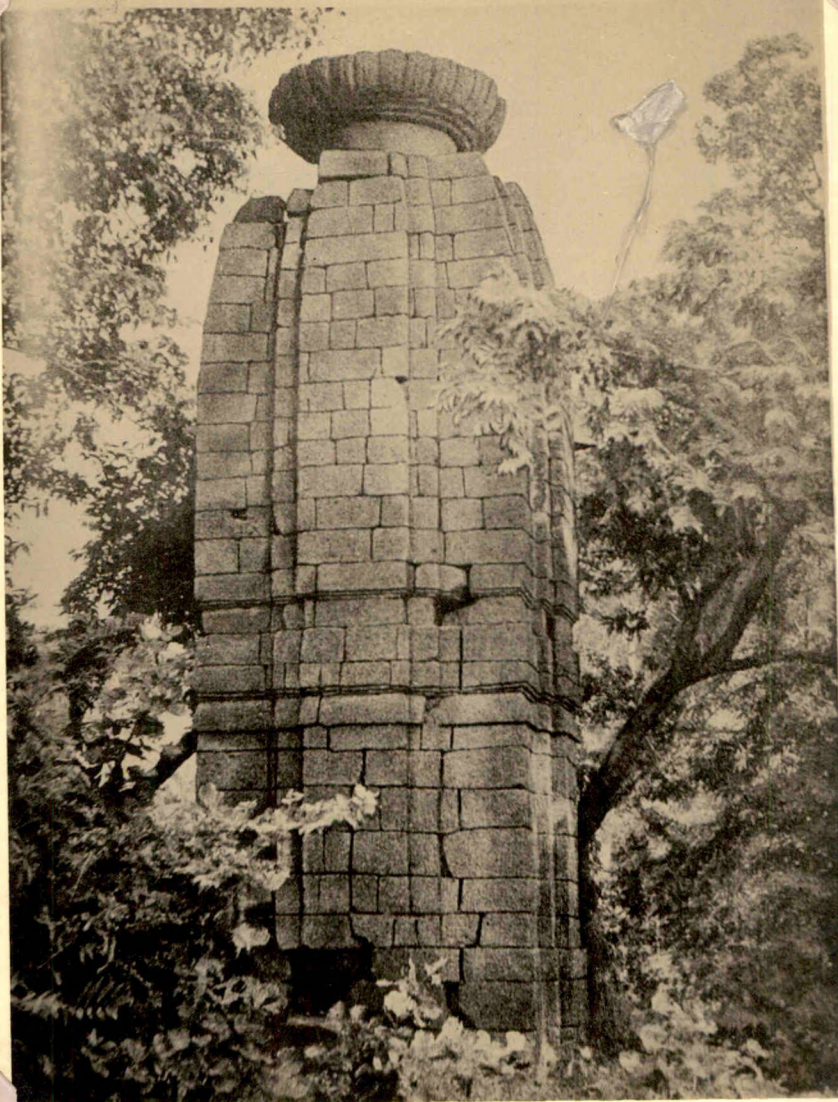
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(b) General Appendix to Report from Select Committee on the Affairs of E.I.C. (1832) London P.335.
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66. Burdwan District Records, Letter issued, 1788-1800 ed by R.Guha, & A. Mitra, P.229
67. Ibid, P.355, Petition of Beshnu Kumari, ^{December,} December 12, 1794.
68. Progs.of the Board of Revenue (Misc) 29 Dec, ^{ember,} 1801
69. Progs.of Territorial Department (Rev) January 11, ^{January,} 1820
- 69(a) Progs. of the Board of Revenue, 4 February 1790
O.C.No: 31-33
70. To J.H.Doyly, Collector of Midnapur, From J.Menzies, ^{May,} Superintendent, Hidgellee Embankments, ~~May~~ 16, 1833.

71. To J.H.Doyly, Collector of Midnapur, From C.Herd,
Superintendent of Embankments, Tamlook Poolbundy
Office, ^{August,} August 3, 1833.
72. (a) Report of the Poolbundi administration of the
Burdwan district from Thomas Marriot, formerly
Superintendent of Poolbundi Repairs for 1788.
(b) Progs.of the Board of Revenue 30 April, 1793
^{July,}
73. Progs.of G.G. in C. ~~July~~ 29, 1791
74. Progs.of the G.G.in C. ^{December,} December 19, ~~1774~~ 1794.
75. Progs.of the G.G.in C. ^{September,} September 30, 1814
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81. From Committee of Burdwan Division to the Board of
Revenue, ^{July,} ~~July~~ 5, 1830, Consultation No.34, ^{July,} ~~July~~ 13, 1830
82. To Major-General John Garstin, Acting Chief Engineer,
Military Dept.From Council Chamber, 11 April 1812,
C.W.Gardiner, Actg. Secy. to the Government in Revenue
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83. Census handbook: Bankura, 1961, P.60
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Built around the 16th century A.D.; according to the Orissan version of the 'Nagara - Sikhara' style of temple architecture, the abandoned stone shrine at Hārmāsārā, 10.5 K.M. west of Balidanga, is an outstanding religious edifice in the district of Bankura, West Bengal.



CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC LIFE OF BISHNUPUR UNDER THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

A. Cotton Textile Industry:-

The cotton textile industry was the most widely-spread of all industries in Bengal. In importance it was next to agriculture. Like other industries it was organised on a domestic basis. Every important village had weaver's cottages with little workshop. The ancient literature contains references to the inland and overseas trade of Eastern India through the historic port of Tamralipta and the merchants traded in the textile goods with far eastern countries and Ceylon which they usually collected from the country side. It was one of the most principal item^{of} trade. In the Muslim period the state Karkhanas received the attention of the ^{hindu} ~~Hindu~~ chiefs of Bishnupur, Midnapore and Burdwan. Under their patronage the growth of the cotton textile industries became inevitable. Many important weaving villages came into existence and cotton cultivation increased to a great extent¹. The cloth factories whether belonging to the foreign nations or private traders were mere agencies for securing supplies. Since the 17th century the Dutch,

French and the English trading companies carried on extensive trade in cotton and silk textile goods. The internal trade of the foreign Companies were carried on through the 'Dadni' merchants who were often harassed by the nawabs by collecting from them arbitrary customs duties and other irregular payments. In order to shield themselves from the oppression of the muslim faujdars many weavers had to take shelter round the British residencies. The English East India Company tried their best to guard these merchants from the torture of such muslim faujdars².

The maratha invasions since the 30's of the 18th century had a declining effect on the production and trade in textile goods. In order to save themselves from the attack of the marathas many weavers fled away from the aurangs³. The result of the Bargir incursions was also felt on the silk industry. The Court of Directors wrote that "The weavers and inhabitants fled; silk was often carried away well, and on the Reels, and piece goods before being manufactured - the one wound off and the other finished in utmost hurry and confusion"⁴.

As a result of which the weavers of Balasore and neighbouring areas fled away to Midnapur, Bishnupur and Calcutta and some took to other professions⁵. Thus the decline of the weaving industry in Orissa stimulated the

textile productions of the important weaving centres of the South-east frontier regions like Radhanagar, Khirpai, Chandrakona, Chetua, Barda and Sonamukhi⁶. (Alivardi Khan concluded peace with Raghuji I in 1751, and the river Subarnarekha became the boundary-line between Orissa and Midnapur. The Bhonsle faujdars exploited the weavers and merchants of Balasore and Pipli which were important centres of cotton and silk industries. In order to avert such exploitation and torture the weavers of those areas fled away to S.W. Bengal⁷.)

In 1751, trading through 'Dadni' merchants came to an end. Since 1753 paid Indian agents (gomasthas) were appointed by the Company for the purchase of textile products and cotton-piece goods directly from the weavers being financed by the Residents and later on by the English private contractors under the Board of Trade. Many weavers used to take advances from the Company for the supply of piece-goods. Sometimes indigenous private traders and foreign merchants also made advances to them. The majority of the weaving community, however, depended on the ready money sale of their fabrics. There was increased demand for textile goods through foreign competitions which gave impetus to the weavers. The inevitable result was the growth of cotton cultivation and cotton spinning in the country side.

The volume of private trade of the Company's writers and their Indian counterparts increased to a great extent and the abuses of dastaks and evasions of payments of internal customs duties strained the relation between the Nawabs and the Company.

So far as the cotton manufacture is concerned there were several processes:

- (1) Separating the cotton from the seed,
- (2) Beating the raw material in order to make it fit for being spun,
- (3) Spinning and weaving, etc.

Most of the cotton manufacturing houses had spinning-wheels numbering five or six. The spinning of cotton thread was mainly the monopoly of women. The spinning industry was not concentrated in the hands of a particular caste or section. It was carried on even by persons belonging to highest caste⁸. The majority of spinners produced the coarser thread out of the country cotton as thread seems to be before the 70's a non-importable commodity. Secondly, a large number of skilled spinners had perished in the famine of 1770 and 1788. The increasing demand for fine thread often outran supply⁹. To encourage the spinning of fine thread the Company's Government adopted special measures from time to time. Price rise was considered to be a

necessity and the commercial Resident of Sonamukhi ¹⁰ had to offer a small premium as incentive to every spinners of finer threads¹¹.

Increased trade in textile goods¹² might have increased the demand for raw-cotton of the region. According to Colebrooke the whole of the raw-cotton required for yarn-making in Bengal was produced locally. But in course of time with the increased demand for raw cotton and simultaneous decline in its cultivation, it began to be imported from Surat and Bombay to Calcutta through water-route and through Mirzapur and Benaras along the Ganga to Murshidabad and local aurangs through land routes¹³. In Bengal revenue records we do not find any statistical data so as to indicate any expansion of area for cotton cultivation. Only stray references in the proceedings volume of the Board of Trade in 1790 indicated that the cotton cultivation in the country was quite inadequate to meet the demand of the Bengal market¹⁴. In Birbhum the local production of cotton was 80,000 mds and about 17,000 mds were imported from Patna. The Burdwan aurangs also depended on the Nagpur and Bombay varieties from Calcutta because Burdwan produced mainly three varieties of cotton viz; the nurma, the muhrea and the bogga cotton. The internal production of cotton at Sonamokhy was also much below the demand of the

market and the aurangs at Bishnupur had no other alternative but to import Berar cotton from Mirzapur weighing about 2500 mds. The Radhanagar varieties of cotton consisted of the Kaur, the muhrea and the bhogee. The local production of the area was about 15,000 to 17,500 mds. and the imported Surat and Bombay cotton from Calcutta was about 3000 mds. The Midnapur aurangs had to depend mainly on the Bombay cotton from Calcutta. Gradually this dependence on the Berar black-soil cotton through Mirzapur increased to a great extent as since 1750 there was a sharp fall in the import of Surat cotton¹⁵. Inevitably there was a sharp rise in the price of raw cotton from Rs. 14-3½ to Rs. 18-7-11 at Keerpoy, from Rs. 13.8 to Rs. 19.4 at Sonamooky between 1792 to 1823. This was also sensitive to price-rise of rice from Rs. 1.12.4 to Rs. 2.9.3. per maund at Keerpoy and at Radhanagar from Rs. 1.8 to Rs. 2.00 during this period¹⁶. Thus the paucity of cheap raw cotton and non-availability of finer hand-made thread, sharpened demands for rise in prices of good quality fabrics which the Company was reluctant to accept. This was the major factor which largely contributed to the decline of textile industry and the Company's Government tactfully decided to import the machine-made thread to this region¹⁷. Under the patronage of the East India Company the village-level textile industry of this region had flourished, but

there was no improvement in Cotton cultivation. This was due to natural calamities like draught and floods, breakdown of Zamindary embankments and increased demands for land-rent in cotton-producing areas by the landed proprietors¹⁸. Neither the Government nor the landed proprietors took any initiative to increase the productivity of the soil. The ryots were dependent on the textile Pykers and the weavers who were reluctant to ^e face increased price of raw cotton of the soil, thus providing a discouraging effect on the cotton cultivation¹⁹.

The Company's cloth aurungs centred round the important places like Bishnupur and Sonamukhi in Bankura, Surul in Birbhum, Radhanagar, Midnapore, Khirpai and Chandrakona in the district of Midnapore. The varieties of fabrics produced in these factories consisted of Khasas (Cossacs), Baftas, Sannoos²⁰, and Gurrahs and Chintz, a kind of coarse printed cloth. There was increased demands of these varieties of cloths. The art of bleaching, dyeing and flowering of the cloths also flourished in these places. The coloured muslins and finer flowered fabrics which were manufactured in this region were exported to Africa, Germany and West Indies²¹. But the early 19th Century witnessed the gradual shrinkage of the foreign markets and change of fashion among the people of this country which might have led to the decline of this process of Cloth

manufacture, and eventually brought about its practical extinction²².

In the cotton textile Industry there could be found no improvement in machinery or in the productive unit. Even the Arkright's spinning Jenny was not imported, while Indian specialised art of bleaching, dyeing and flowering were relegated to the back-ground with the changed demands within and outside the Indian market²³.

It may be said that the direct supervision of the East India Company over the textile industry through Gomasthas in the contract and from 1788 in the Agency systems introduced some changes in the organisation of the weaving industry. From a remote past different villages of Bengal used to produce cotton-textiles for home consumptions. But in the 18th century localisation of the weaving communities belonging to the Hindus and the muslim sects in some villages took place round the foreign residencies and courts of the landed proprietors. Both in the production and trade sectors the century heralded the emergence of a middle class who constituted the link between the financing foreign Companies and the original producers.

In the productive organisation important parts were played by the gomasthas or supervisors over the textile

productions and Company's investments. The role of tagadgeers or collectors of textile goods and Jassandars or appraisers of the valuation of the products was also significant. The tagadgeers who were mostly brahmins and all other officials who belonged to the Hindu sects were recruited from the poorer sections of the village communities at poor money-wages. These ill-paid Indian agents with the help of the village-level pykers or dallals exploited the weavers' communities. Such exploitation became injurious to the interest of the weavers. The gurrah weavers of Sonamooky aurungs protested against such fraud over them in 1780 and left the aurung to work for P. Fouchet (Resident, Radhanagore) and the Company was compelled to suspend for making advances to Gadhadhar Chung, a Pykar²⁴. On many occasions the Company's contractors and Agents took illegal money from the poor weavers and the weavers finding no other alternative invariably protested against them. That led to the resignation of J. Dyneley, Commercial Resident of Radnagore^{he}. The President of the Board of Trade, accepted the resignation of J. Dyneley and appointed Charles Crommelin to succeed him in May 1782 as the Commercial Resident of Radhanagar²⁵. J. Dyneley was, however, requested by the Board to fulfill the Company's engagements for 1781-82. The village-level Pykars whether under the Company's residency or working for the private merchants or foreign companies were responsible for money-advances and

supply of raw-materials from open markets and from Calcutta and purchasing the finished products at ready-money sales on behalf of the affluent weavers. These village level-pykers were the main spring of the textile production and distribution machinery. They were responsible for the procuraments of raw materials, giving contracts to the mandals, making them advances and helping the residents about the prizing of the textile goods. In the Production sector we find a crude form of guild-system. The Mandals (leaders of weavers) with landed properties and large number of weaving machines formed the middle statum of the community. Just below the mandals there existed a number of master weavers who had a number of looms. They procured raw cotton from the cotton producers in the neighbouring markets and sometimes they also employed hired labour for completing their parts of the community-contract with the pykars²⁶. The coarser fabrics were prepared throughout the year, but the finer qualities of fabrics were manufactured in the rainy season (between May-August) owing to an excess of moisture in the atmosphere. These fabrics were manufactured according to the demands of the internal market for ready money-sale²⁷.

The system of advances was also an important feature of the economy. The advances were generally given to the weavers thrice in the year, once in May about 10/16, another about September 4/16 and lastly in the winter about 2/16.

The major part of the advance which was paid in the first instalment was to enable the weavers for buying raw materials and implements, hiring spinners, nikari-apprentices and extra-weavers in accordance with the volume of contracts and also for payment of land-revenue of the landed proprietors and loans of the money-lenders²⁸. In spite of the advances they received, the weavers had to depend largely on ready money sales of their goods to the foreign Companies upto about 1774, and afterwards to the native private parties, and then after 1793 to the combined native and British private parties and also for the open competitive sales in the internal markets to the native whole-sellers.

The system of advances to the weavers made by the Company was undoubtedly the most efficient mode of obtaining their investment. It enabled the Company to secure the supply of standard quality goods within the prescribed time. Practically it saved the Company from the uncertainty of ready-money purchase and prevented fluctuation of prices. The cotton weavers by taking advances from the Company received a good amount of ready capital to start with. Apart from the merits of the system of advance its drawbacks were not far to seek. The money advances in the off-season tended to lower the valuation of the textile products and bound the weavers to the Company's investment all the year round. This was associated with compulsion and physical

torture of the Kuthi-piadas for non-compliance with the obligation. The restraints implying in the contract and harsh regulations of 22nd April, 1782, and 19th July 1786 and 23rd July, 1787, were detrimental to the interest of the weaving community which practically enslaved them to the Company's investments. The Company's pykars made engagements with the master weavers for standard quality products through the system of advances. Such engagements kept away other foreign merchants and private English adventurers from making engagements²⁸ with the weavers in contract with the Company.²⁹ To prevent fraud the weavers were numbered and issued with tickets as an efficient mode of securing the Company's investments. It prevented the weavers from working for a higher price. The Company's Gomasthas and Jassandars were at liberty to reject any number of pieces (of cloth) on the ground that they fell below the standard quality and under-value many of them and thereby kept them under perpetual indebtness.³⁰ In the case of delay or non-fulfilment of the agreement, the manufacturers were liable to penalties and even prosecution.³¹ Moreover, there were increase in the prices of raw materials. During the twenty years from 1793 the wages of the labourers also rose speedily. But the rates given to the skilled - weavers by the Company were extremely low.³² The Company did not allow any proportionate increase in the price of textile-goods.

The master weavers after payment of rent, labour charges and prices for raw materials and good grains were left with negligible margin of profit in a competitive money-market.³³

Further more, the cotton manufacturers who took advances from the Company were debarred from taking any orders of alluring prices from others until the previous orders were fully complied with. In such circumstances, it was really difficult for the low-paid weavers to resist the temptation. The proceedings volumes of the Board of Trade are full of protests of the weavers and their unwillingness to work for the Company. When John Cheap took the charge of the Sonamooky aurung, many madals or heads of the weavers' guilds instigated the weavers under them who refused to enter into engagements with the Company's investments.³⁴ In a letter to the Board of Trade the Resident of Sonamooky expressed that all his "endeavours, constant applications, and attendance" failed to prevent many of the weavers from giving up the Company's business.³⁵ The weavers of Sonamooky as well as of other places for a long time did not agree to sign any written agreement with the Commercial Resident for the supply of cloths.³⁶ Heartless behaviour of the Indian officials of ~~cloths~~ the Residence, fraud committed upon them in ascertaining amount of the quality cloths and adjustment of their advances at undervalue to keep them in perpetual indebtedness, and in case of delay or on paltry grounds keeping

them in chains was irksome to their freedom of work.³⁷ Their protests sometimes took the turn of skirmishes leading to legal persecutions and even to loss of life.³⁸ In spite of its unpopularity the system of advances turned to be the only subsistence when the Company's cloth investments showed signs of decline in the early phase of the 19th century. The shrinkage of the internal and foreign markets, fall in demands for standard quality cloths from the Indian pykars, attributed chiefly to the gradual decline of the weaving industry. Such crisis led to the large-scale unemployment among the weaver-population in the country side.³⁹ In such circumstances, finding no other alternative, many weavers prayed for entering into engagements with the Company's investments.⁴⁰ The Proceedings of the Board of Trade contain numerous references of such weaver's prayers.

Throughout the later half of the 18th century the Company's Government could not maintain monopoly over the trade and manufacture of cotton and silk owing to the competition of the foreign as well as native whole-sale merchants. The Court of Directors complained about the increased volume of trade of the French and the Dutch private traders on silk, cotton textiles and piece-goods which was detrimental to the British interest.⁴¹ But from 1764-1778 in spite of prohibitions, these French and Dutch traders carried on investments on the capital of the servants of

the English Company who wanted remittance of their private fortunes to home secretly in their competitors bills of exchange. The Dutch and the French residents were allowed to work at Radanagore, Sonamooky, Khirpai, Midnapur and Balasore in order to safeguard the interest of the Company's private business. Their wheels of investments were rolling through gomasthas and Indian Pykars. But since 1774 Warren Hastings' policy against the French traders and the attitude of the Court compelled them to withdraw themselves from their Kuthis leaving the gomasthas to carry on brisk trade until the English Company seized their properties after 1784.⁴¹ The weavers were always ready to receive advances from the foreign private merchants and work for their investments because they offered high prices.⁴² After the withdrawal of the French and the Dutch traders in 1784 from the competitive market, the British private traders got a strong foot-hold in the cotton and textile trade particularly after 1793. As a result of which the market for ready-money purchases widened, the weavers subsequently refused to abide by the terms and conditions of the Company's investments contained in the regulations of the late 1780's. The Commercial Residents of Sonamukhi complained that owing to the increase of ready-money purchasers and the higher rates paid by them for all kinds of textile products, the weavers refused to make engagements for the Company's investments.⁴³

Although the regulations of 1787 and 1793 explicitly laid down that no force or compulsion was to be used on any person, the oppression of weavers on the part of the factory servants was not also uncommon even after 1793. The weavers were generally exploited and defrauded by the amlah. The Proceedings of the Board of Trade made copious references to the complaints of the weavers made against the Company's servants. But these complaints did not generally reach the ears of the residents, and even where they did, no remedy could be expected.⁴⁴ These are recorded references to such oppression and of representations made by the weavers to the Board of Trade. Sometimes the weavers were whipped for alleged misconduct and driven by despair, they sometime left their houses and looms to seek comfort in exile.⁴⁵

In 1793 the influx of the private merchants had a direct impact on the Company's weavers who failed to fulfil their obligations to the Company.⁴⁶ Such influx was largely due to the partial opening of the East India trade to private enterprise by the Charter Act of 1793. John Cheap, the then Commercial Resident of Sonamukhi, supervising the Company's investment in the districts

-216-

districts of Birbhum and Bishnupur(The district of Bankura was then known as Bishnupur) and who had his headquarters at Surul (in the neighbourhood of Santiniketan about 3 miles west of Bolpur) thought it necessary to have written agreements from the weavers. But ^{at} ~~the~~ Sonamukhi and Patrasayer the weavers would not have a long time to comply with such demand. Finding no other alternative the Resident dismissed some of the weavers from the Company's employment. As a result of which the head weavers (The head weavers ~~were~~ at the head of weaver's guilds. In those days in almost all important areas there were such guilds) persuaded other weavers not to accept advances from the Resident. To check the influence of these head weavers John Cheap prevented the assembling of the weavers as far as practicable. Such policy proved somewhat successful at Surul but at other places it proved practically fruitless. The Izaradars(lease holders) and the Mandals (village head man) always tried to create mis-understanding between the Resident and the weavers because it was their interest to do so.⁴⁷

During the last few years of the 18th Century and towards the beginning of the 19th Century the Company's

cloth investments at Sonamukhi and at other places was greatly affected by the bad conditions of finance and currency at the time.⁴⁸ The continued high price of cotton and the increasing number of ready-money purchases⁴⁹ and the higher rates paid by them hampered the Company's business to a great extent. John Cheap in order to safeguard the Company's interest raised the rates to the weavers for cloth. But it was not very encouraging. The weavers agreed to supply coarse cloth to the Company, but they showed their unwillingness to weave finer goods which brought them much less profit owing to the scarcity of fine yarn and consequent increase in its price.⁴⁹ To encourage the supply of finer yarn to the weavers, John Cheap introduced the practice of paying a few annas to the spinners as reward. At Patrasayer, this measure proved somewhat successful.⁵⁰ In the midst of various difficulties John Cheap was able to provide large quantities of Birbhum garahs (a species of coarse calico) which had a demand in Europe and America, as well as in the Asiatic and African markets.⁵¹

At one time piece-goods formed the most important item of the Company's investment and almost all the residencies supplied cotton piece goods in less pro-

portions. But after 1818, when the demand for piece-goods in foreign markets fell off, the greatest part of Company's surplus revenue was invested in raw silk.⁵²

Paucity of good quality raw cotton and finer thread at a cheap rate, rise in wages of the labourers, heavy demand of textile-goods on account of the private trade led to the deterioration in the quality of goods.⁵³ Indirectly this tendency affected the Company's investment for superior fabrics. The Company had to depend on private traders and the Indian pykars, because of their financial difficulties for ready-money in investments. Such dependence compelled the Company to buy inferior quality goods which in turn led to the shrinkage in the demands for Indian goods in the foreign markets.⁵⁴ Paucity of superfine cotton and thread ultimately compelled the English company to import Manchester thread⁵⁵ for the manufacture of finer-textile goods. It also deemed to reduce the price of such cloths in the competitive European market.⁵⁶ But even then the weavers of Radhanagore and Keerpoy demanded higher rate for textile goods and the Company stepped up their exportation of cotton twist from England for the Bengal market. A serious crisis thus crept into the spinning industry and the production of raw cotton of this region.⁵⁷

The Company decided to abolish its Residents backed by the Indian pykars and to appoint British agents under the Board of Trade, Commercial. At Sonamukhi and adjoining kuthis John Cheap was appointed as the agent of the East India Company. Towards the end of 1787, after the enactment of the Company's Commercial regulations, it was decided that company's investment of piece-goods, was to be secured not through dalals or middlemen, as was the practice then, but by issuing advances to the weavers directly through their commercial agents.⁵⁸ The pykars and weavers were frequently confronted with robberies committed at Keerpoy and Sonamukhi, for which they had no redress and they also fell victim to the natural calamities like flood for which they had no compensation.⁵⁹

Though fat salaries and allowances were granted liberally to the European agents by Lord Cornwallis in order to maintain high standard of integrity. Agents like John Cheap were allowed to carry on private trade with certain restrictions. But financially the condition of the Company's Indian associates were precarious. They were dependent only on the poor money-wages and intercepted margin of profit from the pykars and skilled-weavers.⁶⁰ Since 1753 and particularly after the battle of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764) the oppressive conduct

of the Company's servants towards the poor weavers' community became unrestrained. Though the Court of Directors instructed the Residents not to use force on the weavers against their will but in practice compulsion was invariably adopted. For the quick delivery of cloths, peons were posted and defaulters were arrested.⁶¹ The Company's Gomasthas and Jassendars exacted perquisites from the weavers. The failure on the part of the weavers to fulfil Company's contract ended in physical assault over them or devaluation of their standard quality goods.⁶² Residents like J.B. Smith of Sonamukhi and J. Dyneley of Radhanagar aurungs also used force against the weavers.⁶³ On many occasions the weaver's petitions to the Board of Trade against such oppressions proved fruitless.⁶⁴ The Regulations of the late 1780's prohibited Company's master-weavers not to enter into contract with private traders. But the weavers "concealed their transactions by weaving their cloths in others house and giving them to be sold by persons who have not taken the Company's advances."⁶⁵

It is generally argued that the Company's system of advance practically enslaved the weavers and worsened their economic conditions. But such statement can not be regarded as cent per cent true. Because there was

large number of weavers who were not in contract with the Company and were dependent on ready-money sale of their goods to the private merchants. The Company's weavers were also allowed to ~~sell~~ their rejected goods and the additional goods manufactured secretly after fulfilling the Company's contract. But none of them could improve their financial lot owing to the lack of sufficient market-facilities, low price of cloths, fall in demands for finer fabrics particularly after the Permanent Settlement. Still then there may be traced a sign of trade union spirit among the weavers towards the close of the 18th century. The records of the Board of Trade reveal the steady rise of an affluent section of weavers, village-level vakeels and ryots who were bold enough to ~~March~~ a procession of aggrieved weavers to lodge complaints at Calcutta.⁶⁶ In the aurguns of Radhanagar, Keerpoy and Sonamukhi traces of forming combinations by the weavers guided by the mandals and pykars could be found out from the recorded instance. Following the foot-steps of the Santipur weavers they sometimes carried on tremendous agitations against the residents and their gomasthas. These movements were aimed at raising the sale-prices and removing official high-handedness.⁶⁷ But the major section of the weavers remained loyal to the

Company.⁶⁸ With a view to getting better sale ~~at~~ price and better sale-terms from the private merchants, many weavers refused to enter into engagements with the Company.⁶⁹ On many occasions they took shelter in another aurungs and worked there by changing their names in order to evade detections and to hoodwink the pykars. Non-improvement in the spinning or weaving looms or in the cultivation of cotton contributed much to the decline of this village-level industry. Since the last decade of the 18th century the industrial revolution also affected the fate of the Bengal weavers. John Cheap, one of the illustrious civil servants of the East India Company who had been rightly regarded as "Cheap-the magnificent", undertook various works of public utility. Gang robbery and the Zamindar's oppressions were stopped. New roads were constructed to facilitate easy communications and public expenditure increased for constructions of embankments. In spite of these benevolent measures the decline of the textile industry of the region under review could not be averted.

Scholars like R.C. Dutt pointed out that the causes of the decline of the handloom cotton industry was mainly due to "the policy pursued in England to discourage Indian manufacturers" and to force British manufacturers

into this country. C.J.Hamilton holds the view that the failure of the Indian manufacturers to compete with the machine-made products of England was responsible for its downfall. J.C.Sinha is of opinion that the decline of the textile industry was largely due to the Industrial Revolution in England. According to K.K.Dutta the downfall of the Bengal cotton industry "did not begin or end at any definite day, but was a long process continuing for many years." Apart from these causes, the bargir invasions, political anarchy and spread of gang-robbery after the decline of the Mughal Empire, the famines of 1775 and 1788, the oppression of the Company's gomasthas and Dalals, importation of Manchester machine-made fabrics, fall in the demands of Bengal cotton goods at home and abroad also led to the decline of the weaving industry.

The arguments of all these scholars to explain the decline of the cotton industry failed to touch the main problem of the crisis.

Because the expansion of the British Empire in India followed by the political stability signalled the opening of a vast internal market. The British Government also adopted certain measures of public utility. Various

schemes for irrigation and improved means of communications were undertaken. Gang-robbery was suppressed to a great extent. The sharp fall in the price of Manchester yarn benefited the handloom cotton industry no doubt but it gave a death blow to the indigenous spinning industry. Imported piece-goods from England led to the fall in prices of cloth which made the economic condition of the handloom weavers miserable, during the early 19th century.⁷⁰ Modern scholars like Morris D. Morris holds the view that "while British cloth was competitive with Indian handloom production machine-made yarn seems to have strengthened the competitive position of the indigenous handloom sector despite the fall of cloth prices".⁷¹

The industrial Revolution might have had a discouraging effect on the cotton textile industry in this region. The Indian weavers lost the foreign market. But why did they fail to monopolise the traditional internal market in the early phase of the 19th century? There was undoubtedly increasing demand of Indian textile products abroad in the late 18th century. Then why there could not be any improvement in the cultivation of cotton? Why was the rapid deterioration in the standard of cotton yarn

inspite of larger dependence of Bengal spinners on the black-soil cotton from Mirzapur ? And, why the inevitable conflict between the foreign private traders and the Company's investment could not strengthen the commercial position of the ryots, weavers and the Indian entrepreneurs ? These questions could not be solved by the mere plea of Industrial Revolution in England.

For the study of these paradoxes the internal forces as well as the external pressures which barred the usual growth of the weaving industries of this region could be taken into consideration. An analysis of these factors reveals that the importation of machine-made yarn in the early 19th century led to the fall in prices of textile products which had a discouraging effect on the cotton-cultivation and cotton spinning industry. But it could not be ignored that throughout the 18th century the Company's policy of investment aimed at low rate of the products and low wages to the weavers certainly had a discouraging effect on cotton-cultivation and thread production of the country, while there was a steady rise in the prices of food-stuffs and wages of labour. The ryots and the landed proprietors did practically nothing to

improve the cotton cultivation because of the easy availability of Mirzapur cotton at a cheap rate. In the productive machinery also no improvement could be found out to avert the danger of Arkright's spinning jenny. Since 1785, there was extensive growth of cotton-spinning mills in England. It marked the steady rise of cotton-thread import to Calcutta. In 1825-26 the value of British yarn imported into Calcutta was only Rs.81,000. Next year it exceeded Rs.8,00,000 and in 1838-39, total import amounted to Rs.56 lakhs.⁷² The Indian entrepreneurs⁷³ failed to modernise the spinning mills due to the exploitative character of the British Raj. Less supply of raw materials and less capital investment resulting in the less supply of piece-goods and lowering of their quality narrowed down the market for such products. The Company's tariff policy and imposition of fresh taxes over indian goods in order to safe-guard their own interests led to crisis of a serious nature in the hand-loom cotton industry of this region. The decline started from the finest qualities of fabrics. Gradually its effect fell on the fine and coarser qualities of cloths.

The decline of cotton industry gave a death blow to the master weavers and spinners. Many other people associated with this industry like the dyers, the bleachers, the cotton-beaters and needle-workers were thrown out of employment. The Governor-General in 1832 expressed his sentiment in the following words:-

"Cotton piece goods, for so many ages the staple manufacture of India thus for ever lost..... The sympathy of the Court is deeply excited by the Report of the Board of Trade exhibiting the gloomy picture of the effects of a commercial revolution, productive of so much present suffering to numerous classes in India, and hardly to be paralleled in the history of commerce".⁷⁴

B. Silk and Sugar Industry:-

Like Cotton textile goods and salt, silk was one of the most important items of Company's investment. The literary sources like Katha-Sarit-Sagar (6th century A.D) mentions that the silk-goods were one of the important commercial products passing through the historic port of Tamralipta. Silk and muslim fabrics were undoubtedly the

two outstanding commodities of Bengal's past trade. From a remote past, Bengal was producing these valuable stuff and was sending them to the silk-marts of Dacca, Sonargaon and Saptagram for the use of her princes and noble men. The reputation of the silk fabrics of Bengal had spread to the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. The testimony of Lambourn⁷⁵ clearly shows that "Nearly 23 years before the advent of the East India Company in India i.e. about 1577, a merchant of Mala Sheik Bhik set sail for Russia with three ships laden with silk cloth and that two of his ships were wrecked some where near the Persian Gulf".

The scholars think that Bengal is indebted to China for the art of silk manufacture.⁷⁶ The culture of silk-worm was first undertaken in China and the product of the insect was first used there as a material for textiles.⁷⁷ The well-known Chinese work called the 'Silk worm classic' testified to the fact that about 2,600 B.C. a Queen named Si-Ling-Chi first encouraged the silk industry in China.⁷⁸ It is evident from old literature on the subject that the technical know how of the silk manufacture reached India about 300 A.D.⁷⁹ It is evident from the records of the Imperial Records Department that

even towards the end of the 18th century the East India Company did not hesitate to take the services and advice of the Chinese silk experts for the improved quality of silk worm eggs and mulberry plants for developing the industry.⁸⁰

The muslim rulers of the 16th century India, the local Hindu nobility as well as the temples were the great patrons of silk-manufacturers.⁸¹ The Pathan and Mughal rulers as well as the Dutch and French companies carried on extensive trade in silk products.^{81(a)} The British merchants also traded in silk with the help of Indian merchants who collected the goods from the interior parts of this region after paying the internal transit duties.⁸² The foreign companies tried their best to get duty-free trade privileges from the nawabs of Bengal.

The English East India Company tried to maintain direct contact with the silk-manufacturers. In the early 18th century that protected the cotton and silk manufacturers from financial exactions of the Maratha and muslim faujdars. Under the patronage of the Company Radhanagar and Bishnupur in Bengal became important silk producing centres.⁸³ But the silk production in these centres could not reach the climax due to the Bargir invasions in the mid-18th century.⁸⁴

In 1751, the treaty between Alivardi Khan and Raghuji-I demarcated the frontier between Balasore and Midnapur. By 1753 the English Company dropped the idea of carrying on their silk investments through the Indian merchants. The Kuthi gomasthas and the Pykars were the paid agents of the Company who acted as a link between the Company's Residents and the original producers. The French as well as the Dutch Companies ^{had} their Kuthis at Radhanagar, Sonamukhi and Ghatal for the procurement of Bengal ~~would~~ ^{would} silk and piece-goods. The records clearly testify to the fact that many artisans fled away from Orissa and took shelter in Midnapur and Bankura owing to the financial tortures of the Marathas.⁸⁵ The persecutions of the maratha faujdars continued unhampered in Orissa from 1751 to 1803 during the rule of the Bhonsle Rajas of Nagpur. In the frontier districts of Midnapur and Jungle-mahals, however, the Company made elaborate arrangements to protect the artisans from the tortures of Marathas and muslim faujdars.⁸⁶ The Company imported in exchange yarn from Mirzapur to Murshidabad in exchange of Bengal ~~would~~ silk and silk piece goods.⁸⁷ Besides Sahukar merchants the Sannyasi merchants of Benaras also traded in Bengal silk to upper India. The total value of the import and export of the Gossains at Mirzapur and Benaras from Bengal in 1787

(which passed through the Raja of Benaras's customas houses) amounted to Rs.1,614,795. They generally remitted gold to Bengal for the raw silk and piece goods.⁸⁸ The Gossains carried on silk trade through Purnea. One Gossain merchant alone sent over Rs.650,000 worth of silk a year to the Upper Provinces.⁸⁹

Inspite of the Act of 1700 A.D. which prohibited importation of Indian silk products to England,⁹⁰ goods began to be exported to the different parts of the Beritish India. The Company turned to the manufacture and trade in raw silk after 1757. But the Company soon realised that the Indian silk could not compete with the Spanish or Italian silk owing to the inferior method of reeling adopted by the chassars of Bengal. The Court of Directors, therefore, sent three supervisors and some Italian artisans to Bengal in 1770, for the introduction of Italian novi pattern of reeling in the silk manufacturing units of Bengal.⁹¹ Steps were also taken with the help of these Italian artisans to introduce new mode of mulberry cultivation. To encourage the ryots for the cultivation of mulberry plants, waste lands were granted to them rent-free for two years.⁹² The silk cocoons were reared by chassars who rented mulberry fields from the ryots.

These chassars and mulberry ryots (sometimes chassars and ryots were the same persons) had to take all risks in cocoon-rearing and feeding the worms. In case of heavy rains or flood or inundation from rivers they had to face serious difficulties. They had also to depend on the terms and conditions of the Pykars. The records of the Board of Trade referred to the complaints of the ryots against the landed proprietors and the Pykars when they intentionally put impediments on their labour and forced them to sell cocoons in their own terms.⁹³ The Company's pykars like Dullol Doss Mannah who belonged to the Company's aurang at Radhanagar harrassed the ryots by refusing to settle their ~~acc~~ounts for years ~~to~~ together.⁹⁴ Charles Crommelin, the Resident at Radhanagar, had, therefore, no other alternative but to intervene~~d~~ in the aforesaid matter in order to protect the interest of the silk ryots of Radhanagar.⁹⁵ The havoc of the great famine of 1771-72 swept away one third of the total population engaged in silk cultivation all over Bengal.⁹⁶ Inspite of such calamity of a serious nature the Company's efforts to encourage the production of raw silk continued unhampered. From 1771 supplies of eggs for silk worms were obtained from China⁹⁷ and ~~in 1773 another team of skilled factors were sent to~~

Bengal⁹⁷ and in 1773 another team of skilled factors were sent to Bengal⁹⁸ for the purpose of increasing silk productions. These attempts met with success and by 1775 the average export of raw silk to England rose to more than 5,60,000 "small pounds" a year.⁹⁹ (There were two measures for raw silk, great pound of 24.02 and small pound of 16.02)

The ~~several~~^{different} kinds of mulberry silk worms reared in this region were-

- (1) The Nistari or Madrasi which were suitable for warm and rainy seasons;
- (2) Deshi palu (Chhota-palu) for the cold seasons;
- (3) Barapalu, hatching only once in the year;
(and lastly mention may be made to the Chena-palu which was reared mainly in the Tamluk sub-division of Midnapur)

In Birbhum, Midnapur, Murshidabad and Nadia lands were often inundated during the rainy season^{Causing} injury to the mulberry plants and cocoons.¹⁰⁰ For such stormy weather and heavy rains the chassars had to sustain heavy losses. The parasitic flies were also dangerous to the art of silk-rearing.¹⁰¹ In addition to the yellow silk of the mulberry plants two other varieties of silk were produced in Bengal. They were known as the tassar and the endi. The endi worms

were reared chiefly in North Bengal and Assam and the tassar cocoons were wide spread in the South-west Bengal and Orissa.¹⁰² The tassar silk industry was in a prosperous condition in the district of Bankura. The tassar merchants employed the weavers and were responsible for the marketability of these silk piece goods. The Kethas or coarse clothes made out of thread spun from pierced cocoons were also largely produced in this district.

The classes of people who were directly benefited by the silk industry were cultivators of the mulberry plants, rearers of silk worms, winders and weavers.¹⁰³ The lot of the people who were associated with the silk industry was somewhat more secure than other section of artisans. Much of the silk winding was generally carried on in the Company's factories by skilled workmen employed for this purpose. The breeders receiving advances from the Company, supplied the cocoons.^{103(a)} The Commercial Residents at first had direct contact with these persons. But the increasing silk investment of the Company compelled them to appoint dalals or middlemen. The employees of the silk arurungs were generally paid monthly wages. Both adults (male and female) and boys were employed in silk factories. Ordinarily there was no difference between superior and inferior workmen. But at times more skilled realers were granted additional remuneration

by way of reward.¹⁰⁴ At Malda and Ganutia the silk-realers were, however, divided into classes and paid according to their skill.¹⁰⁵ Among the various silk factories of Bengal established by the Company, mention may be made to Cossimbazar, Kumarkhali, Sonamukhi, Radhanagar, Ghatal, Rampur, Boaleah, Sarda, Supur, Ganutia, Jangipur and Lakshmipur.¹⁰⁶ Some independent persons also carried on silk-winding in their own houses.

The indigenous method of winding was chiefly followed by these persons in their private houses and the silk reeled by these men was called Bengalwound silk. Gradually some of these workers followed the Italian method of reeling. The Company usually exported both filature silk (produced from the factory) and Bengal-would silk (produced by the independent workers in their own houses). These independent workers also received advances both from the Company and the private silk merchants to carry on their business of silk manufacture.

With the introduction of filature silk the cultivation of the indigenous cocoons became uncertain. In 1830 in the evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords the degeneration of silk worms was clearly asserted.¹⁰⁷ The degeneration was thought to be the result

of successive mulberry cultivation in one field. In 1812 the Company requisitioned the service of Dr. Raxburgh for the improvement in the method of mulberry plantation and of rearing of silk worms. In 1832 the Italian silk worms from St. Helena was imported and introduced at Sonamukhi.¹⁰⁸ In 1801, out of the total amount of Rs. 8,62,500 sanctioned for the Company's raw silk investment, the sum of Rs. 2,25,000 was set apart for Bengal-wound silk. But gradually the investment in filature silk was decreased until in 1826, it was entirely prohibited by the Court of Directors, except under special circumstances.¹⁰⁹

The famine of 1770 had disastrous consequences on the silk industry of this region. Apart from the death of a large number of silk-workers, many mulberry fields were transformed into paddy fields. During the war-years of 1780-83 the demands of silk in the internal market fell and in 1784 the scarcity of grain forced many chassars to give up mulberry cultivation. The Government agreed to settle mulberry fields at a low rate on the permanent basis,¹¹⁰ but the chassars argued that a lower rate of assessment would be counter-balanced by the additional revenue produced by the actual measurement.¹¹¹ During 1783-87 the mulberry cultivators and the cocoon chassars fail

in critical economic position arising out of the problems like less demands of raw silk and the machinations of the Dallals. After the permanent settlement the landed aristocrats increased the volume of abwabs which proved to be disastrous to the mulberry ryots and cocoon chassars. Apart from this, the torture of the zamindary gomasthas, inclement weather and the dictations of the whole-sale merchants left the silk workers in a position of insecurity.

The decline in the export of cotton piece-goods resulted in the increase of the export of silk fabrics. Bengal silk soon acquired a very good position in the foreign market. The highest export recorded during 1819-20 was valued at Rs. 94,10,743.¹¹² The value of export to Great Britain in that year amounted to 67 lakhs of rupees.¹¹³ The increasing demand of raw silk, therefore, compelled the Company's Government to open a new silk centre at Santipur,¹¹⁴ while the extension work in the existing aurungs were adopted to increase the volume of production.¹¹⁵ With decline of the cotton-textile industry in the early years of the 19th century the persons who were thrown out of employment were, however, resettled in Khirpai, Radhanagar, Ghatal and Sonamukhi factories as silk weavers. But a large number of such weavers were appointed by the Indian private traders. In absence of adequate capital and varying demands of silk-

goods in Indian markets, the Indian entrepreneurs failed to grant a steady subsistence grant to the poor weavers. Many chassars had their own land but they were chiefly dependent on weaving. The carders and spinners were very poor and had no lands of their own. When they were not spinning matka or working in filatures they simply worked in the ordinary paddy-fields as day labourers. The social position of the silk-weavers was better than that of the cotton-weavers or cultivators. But all these persons were under the cultches of the money-lender Mahajans. "Besides getting silks at a cheap rate they charged the weavers heavy rates of interest- 12 to 36% per annum. The progress of the silk weaving industry, as of many other industries in Bengal, was greatly impeded by the grabbing policy of the rich money-lenders who got all the goods out of an industry, leaving the actual workers poor".¹¹⁶

At the beginning, the Company did not monopolise the silk trade in this region. The Dutch and the French Companies as well as the private individuals were also allowed to participate in silk trading.¹¹⁷ According to the decision of the Company to replace them by Company's own officials¹¹⁸ the agents were appointed at Sonamukhi, Guntatia and Radhanagar. As a result of which, by 1793 the total value of raw silk

obtained from the aurungs exceeded 29 lakhs of rupees.¹¹⁹ During the French revolutionary wars, the silk trade of the East India Company showed signs of decline. In 1793 the Company suffered a loss of more than 4% on raw silk, and many of the silk-piece goods remained unsold.¹²⁰ To save themselves from further losses, the Company decided to throw the surplus Bengal silk into the organzine in England,¹²¹ and during the ten years ending in 1803, an average of 150 bales of Bengal silk was thrown into organzine every year.

About this time, the financial difficulties of the Company greatly affected their silk investment. In 1801 the amount allotted for silk investment slightly exceeded 8,62,000 sicca rupees,¹²² which was much below the allotments of previous years.

In 1802, the total quantity of silk provided was only 78,950 lbs.¹²³ The total export of silk carried on by the private traders during the years 1795-1806 was worth 1,60,70,657 sicca rupees.¹²⁴ The consequences of the Napoleonic war led the Company to increase the volume of trade on filature silk. They decided to provide at least four thousand bales of silk every year.¹²⁵ The silk factory of Ganutia was purchased by the Company in 1807^{125(a)} (After the death of Frushard) and was placed in charge of John Cheap, the Commercial Resident of Sonamukhi. The

yearly production of silk at this factory upto 1813 amounted to an average of over 600 maunds.¹²⁶ After 1813 there was a remarkable increase in the export of raw silk from Bengal particularly from the aurungs of Sonamukhi, Radhanagar and Ganutia.

The regular export of raw silk from Bengal began in 1772. The annual average of export from 1773 to 1792 was about 409,000 lbs. During 1799 to 1812, it was about 4,38,554 lbs. During 1813-1834 it was 982,61 lbs.¹²⁷ The Company continued its silk operations in Bengal until 1835 (according to W.W.Hunter, 1833) when it gave up its commercial monopoly. Thus the connection of the East India Company with Bengal silk came to an end. The Company could not, however, suddenly throw out of employment the persons engaged in silk, manufacture and hence their silk factories were not entirely disposed of till 1837.

Since 1807 the remarkable increase in the volume of export of Bengal silk could not, however, give an impetus to the silk industry of this region. There could be found no proportionate increase in the cultivation of mulberry plants. Successive cultivation of the plants on the same fields led to a pernicious effects on the cocoons. The silk-worms were underfed and the price of the mulberry leafs reached to a great height.¹²⁸ The pykars who used to supply cocoons to the Company's aurungs were generally

guided by profit-making tendencies.¹²⁹ They totally ignored the quality of the cocoons. The wages of the labourers increased. The rate of the fire-wood was also enhanced due to indiscriminate cutting of woods and conversion of swampy lands into paddy fields.¹³⁰ Steps were, however, taken to preserve forests and to supply fire-wood at cheap rate. The private traders and the whole-sale dealers sometimes faced difficulties in procuring bullock carts and ferry-boats for which they had to incur financial losses.¹³¹ The financial oppressions of the Company's gomasthas on many occasions led the pykars to make complaints against them.¹³² The silk Diwans like Shum Kishore Sing of Chandrakona who went to Sonamukhi with the silk-weavers amassed huge fortunes.¹³³ The high prices of the cocoons demanded by the whole-salers went beyond the reach of many private traders. The rent of the land was also high. In these circumstances, the East India Company had no other alternative but to wind up their silk business under the provisions of the Charter Act of 1833.¹³⁴ They withdrew from the field in 1835. After their withdrawal large European private firms such as Messers Watson & Co., James Lyall & Co., Louis Payen & Co., and the Bengal Silk Company came into field.¹³⁵

The British Residents like Charles Crommelin of Radhanagar and John Cheap of Sonamukhi were responsible

for the enormous development of the Company's cotton and silk industries at Radhanagar, Sonamukhi, Surul and Khirpai. They were the excellent examples of the British Commercial civilians for their good manners and organising abilities. The Commercial residency of Sonamukhi also provided regular supplies of Shellac, gunnies and sugar. Gummies were manufactured at Kanchannagar¹³⁶ while shellac was made both at Surul and Sonamukhi¹³⁷. According to a report of the Company's inspector in Calcutta the Shellac produced at Surul was of an excellent quality.¹³⁸

Besides textile goods and salt, the third significant investment of the Company's Government was on sugar manufacture. The investment of sugar was obtained partly by contract with individual persons and partly by manufacturing it in the Company's factories. Sugar-cane grew extensively in the districts of Bankura, Birbhum and Midnapur. Indigenous methods were generally followed in these places for the manufacture of cane-juice and molasses.¹³⁹ The East India Company decided to make investments on sugar as an important exportable commodity. In 1790, attempts to introduce West Indian methods of sugar-cane cultivation in Bengal were undertaken by the Company.

In 1785 the rising prices of sugar in the United Kingdom owing to increased tea consumption demanded the export of sugar to England.¹⁴⁰ The Company by an agreement secured the help of one Paterson who opened a factory at Birbhum and Kanchannagar.¹⁴¹ The Company made advances to the cane-growers and sugar manufacturers of Radhanagar and Surul through the pykars.¹⁴² As regards contract sugar, the following rates were fixed by the commercial Resident with the Pykars for its supply in 1793.¹⁴³

Birbhum Sugar	...	Rs. 6-12-0 per maund
Burdwan Sugar	...	Rs. 7- 6-0 -do-
Bishnupur Sugar	...	Rs. 7- 8-0 -do-

The system of advances to the pykars was, however, not beneficial to the cane-growers. John Cheap favoured the idea of direct negotiations with the original producers. In a letter to the Board of Trade dated the 17th November, 1793, he wrote that "The prohibition of making advances direct to the ryots threw the detail of that essential part into the hands of pykars, sugar boilers and others who only entered into engagements late in the season,³ long after the crop had been planted out and therefore, from the issue of the money, the ryot derived no assistance, to extend his cultivation".¹⁴⁴ But the Board did not favour the idea

of John Cheap. However in 1794 the Company ordered for 25,000 maunds of sugar from the residency of Sonamukhi.¹⁴⁵ It was probably the largest quantity ever ordered from there. Birbhum sugar was manufactured at Surul. This variety of fine grain sugar was not comparatively cheap in its price but enjoyed good reputation in the European market. The Radhanagar good quality sugar also was cheap and the Board ordered for 34,000 maunds in 1794.¹⁴⁶ In 1796, an establishment was also started at Santipur with a hope that molasses from Sonamukhi and Radhanagar could be brought there by river-route during the rainy season, and the "dobara" variety of sugar could easily be sent to Calcutta.¹⁴⁷ But the demand for Bengal sugar in Great Britain fell off after a few years and in 1801, the Company withdrew their new establishments at Santipur.¹⁴⁸

The Company, therefore, suspended the regular payment of advances for sugar. The rise in prices of the cane juice also created some difficulties to the Company's investments in Sugar. The Resident at Radhanagar in 1804 felt the difficulty" of short supply of cash for the provision of sugar."¹⁴⁹ Some private merchants from Calcutta making engagements with the sugar pykars of Radhanagar bought sugar from them when the Company decided not to invest money at enhanced prices of sugar.¹⁵⁰ John Cheap

also took the opportunity of private trading in sugar, although he tried his best to extend the cane cultivations in Surul and Sonamukhi and introduced some improvement in sugar manufacture by means of apparatus brought from Europe.¹⁵¹

Since 1813, however, the sugar industry showed remarkable prosperity, but the non-availability of statistical data prevents one to have an accurate idea of the extension of paddy cultivation to avoid shortage of food and absence of large scale capital investment in sugar cultivation, hindered the growth of sugar industry in this region. From 1829-30, however, the West Indian sugar captured the foreign market to a great extent which proved unfavourable to the growth of Bengal sugar industry.

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6. Abbe de Guoyn, II, P.498, Holwell- P.123
7. Abbe de Guoyn Vol, II, PP.496-97
8. W.Ward - A view of the history, Literature and mytho-
logy of the Hindoes, i, P.93; Martin, Eastern India,
ii, P.267
9. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) 22 September, 1789,
Letter of 15 September.
10. Sonamukhi is a small municipal town in the district of
Bankura about 25 miles from Bankura town. It was once
famous for the cloth manufacture, and its Shellac
industry has not altogether died out. Sonamukhi was
not the head station of the Commercial residency of
that name. The head station was at Surul in the
Birbhum district while at Sonamukhi there was a
subordinate factory.

11. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) Cons. ^{May,} May 12, 1797
12. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) Cons. 29 June, 1827,
No. 29
13. Colebrooke, Remarks, etc, P. 84 ^{H.T. on The Husbandry and internal Commerce of Bengal (2nd ed.) Calcutta - 1804}
14. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) Vol. 87, 20 August, 1790
15. The Economic History of Bengal, Vol. I, N.K. Sinha, P. 10
16. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) 29 June, 1827, No. 30
17. App. to Report from Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company (1832) ii, Part 2, P. 516
18. Report of the Districts of Midnapur including Hijelee and Cuttack, Henry Ricketts, Calcutta, 1858 Part I
19. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{May,} May 19, 1797,
Hamilton, Hindustan, I, P. 29.
20. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{November,} November 11, 1806;
Home, Pub. Cons. 1 August 4, 1817, No. 35
21. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{November,} November 18, 1793
22. H.R. Ghosal - Economic transition in the Bengal Presidency, P. 6
23. The Economic History of Bengal Vol. I by N.K. Sinha, P. 29
24. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial), 25 September, 1789
25. Letter of J. Dyneley, to P.M. Dacres, President,

- Committee of Aurungs, dated ^{May,} May 26, 1782, Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial), 30 May, 1782
26. Economic transition, etc, Ghosal, P.4
27. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial), ^{November,} November 11, 1806
28. Economic transition, etc. Ghosal, Ref. No.67, P.17
29. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial), ^{June,} June 3, 1793
30. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial), ^{MAY,} May 7, 1793,
^{MAY,} May 8, 1818
31. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial), ^{MAY,} May 27, 1793
Harrington, An Elementary Analysis of the Laws and Regulations, iii, P.597
32. The rates given to the weavers were generally low. According to agreement between the Commercial Resident and the weavers of Sonamukhi dated ^{January.} January, 1793, the price given to the latter for "A" class garahs was only Rs.3 and 9 as per piece, whereas the price obtained for the same pieces at the London sales was 45 s. and 6 d. each Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons. ^{June,} June 3, 1793, Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{March,} Cons. March 13, 1794
33. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{August,} August 12, 1794
34. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{July,} July 22, 1794
35. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons; ^{June,} June 21, 1796
36. Letter from Commercial Resident, Sonamooky to Board of Trade, Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons May 27, ^{May,} 1796.

37. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{May,} May 27, 1793, June 29, 1794
38. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{June,} June 29, 1794, May 27, 1799
39. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) 7 April, 1829; B.T.General, Letter of 3 September, 1828, which mentions Board's report of 29 June, 1827
40. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) 20 August, 1790
41. Letter from Court 1772-73 No.16, P.22
42. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{July,} July 4, 1794, ^{November,} July 22, 1794, November 11, 1800
43. Bengal Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{November,} November 11, 1800
44. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) 31 March, 1815
45. Prog. Ind.hist.Rec.Comm.1955, Vol.XXXI(Part II), Records relating to Company's Commercial residencies in the Bengal Presidency by H.R.Ghosal, PP.121-129
Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons. March 31, 1815
46. Letter to Board of Trade, ^{June,} June 29, 1794
47. Letter from John Cheap to Board of Trade, ^{July,} July 29, 1794- Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial)Cons, ^{August} August 5, 1794
48. Home Department Public Cons.(Imperial Record Department) ^{August} August 22, 1796, No.29, ^{April} April 6, 1798 Nos.2 and 3,

quoted by Hari Ranjan Ghosal- Cheap the magnificent,
The Indian Historical Quarterly Vol.^{XXII}, No.3, September
1946, PP.200-206

49. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons. November 11, 1800 ^{November,}
50. Bengal Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons. May 12, 1797 ^{May,}
51. In 1795 about 1,30,000 pieces of Birbhum cloth were
exported from Calcutta to the different parts of Europe
and America, exclusive of what were sent to the U.K-
B.T.C. June 21, 1796. About 2,000 pieces of garha and
from 300 to 1,200 pieces of dussooti (double-thread
cloth) were annually exported from the commercial
residency of Sonamukhi about this time to the Cape of
Good Hope-Home Department Pub.Cons. May 1, 1798, No.6;
and May 22, 1800, No.16
52. Board of Trade(Commercial) Cons. 9 January, 1827
53. Board of Trade(Commercial) June 5, 1801 ^{June,}
54. Milburn, William, Oriental Commerce, II, London,
1813, P.217
55. Board of Trade(Commercial) 20 April, 1781
56. Board of Trade(Commercial) 27 August, 1819
57. Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha, i, PP.110-111
58. Harrington - An elementary Analysis of the Laws and
Regulations, Vol.III, P.593
59. Board of Trade (Commercial) 6 May, 1785

60. Board of Trade(Commercial) 5 February, 26 March, 22 June 1830
61. Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{August} ~~August~~ 1, 1794, January 7, ~~January~~, 1799
62. Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{May,} May 8, 1818
63. Board of Trade(Commercial) 24 December, 1782
64. Board of Trade(Commercial) 26 November, 1782
65. Board of Trade(Commercial) 15 July, 1783
66. Board of Trade(Commercial) 7 April, 1820
67. Board of Trade(Commercial) 31 January 1804, Letter of 6 January, 1803
68. Letter of 21 January, 1803
69. Board of Trade(Commercial) ^{August} ~~August~~ 5, 1794
70. On the 19th century Indian Economic History - A Review of a "Reinterpretation" - by Toru Matsui- The Indian Economic and Social History Review, VolV, No.1 March 1968, PP.20-21
71. Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History - By Morris D. Morris, I.E.S.H.R VolV, No.1 March, 1968, PP.8-9
72. Appendix to Report from Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company 1832, ii, Part 2, O.516
73. The Indian enterprenures mean Baniyans like Sdha and Basaks and relatively poor pykars like Mandals and dalals

74. Minute of Governor-General, ^{May,} May 30, 1832, quoted in Gen.App. to Report from Select Committee on the affairs of the East India Company (1832) P.275
75. Malda District Gazetteer, 1918, P.59
76. The encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911(Handy, Vol.issue) Vol.25, P.57
77. A.F.M. Abdul Ali- The Silk Industry in the days of John Company, Progs.of Indian Historical Records, Commission, Vol.VIII, 1925, PP.87-88
78. Dictionary of Universal Knowledge, by W.& R.Chambers, Vol. iii, 1877, P.724.
79. The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911, Vol.25, P.97
80. Home, Public Progs. 16 February, 1791, O.C.No.26, and Home Public Proceedings 30 January, 1788, O.C.No.17
81. Orme, 11, P.4
- 81(a) Growth of Commercial Agriculture- Binay Bhusan Chaudhury, The Indian Economic and Social History review, Vol.VII, No.2, June, 1970, PP.211-251, E.F.I(1618-1621) W. Foster, P.193
82. D.S.M. II, P.84-85
83. Holwell - I.H.E., PP.200
84. Groze, Voyages to the East Indies, II, P.236
85. Board of Trade(Commerce), 30 August, 1805

86. Rev.Long's Selections from the Records of the Govt.
of India, Vol.I, P.239
87. Colebrooke, P.84
88. A.Shakespeare (ed) Selections from the Duncan Records,
Vol.II, Benaras, 1873, PP.16-20
89. Buchanan, Francis - An Account of Purnea in 1809-
1810, Patna 1928, P.540
90. J.C.Sinha - Economic Annals of Bengal, PP 25-27
91. Milburn, Oriental Commerce, II, P.252
92. Bengal Past and Present XXIX, P.351, J.H.T.Walsh-
History of Murshidabad, P.103
93. Boards of Trade(Commercial) 25 April,1787; B.T.C.
16 September,1819
94. B.T.C. 21 March,1786
95. Board of Trade(Commercial) Letter of Charles
Crommelin addressed to William Barton, President
and members of the Board of Trade dated 18 March,1786
96. Bengal past and Present XXIX, P.37
97. J.H.T. Walsh - History of Murshidabad, P.103
98. Ibid; The names of the Factors were Platell,
Baumgartner, Frushard, and Brigant
99. Ibid; The total importance of raw silk into England
from Italy, China and other non-Indian countries
during 1776-1785 averaged only 282,304 small lbs.
a year - Milburn, Oriental Commerce ii, P.252.

100. Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{30 May, 1793} March 13, March, 1818
101. N.G. Mukherji ~~A~~ Monograph ~~on~~ ^{on The silk fabrics of Bengal Calcutta} 1903, pp. 8-9
102. Ibid; Pp 106-110
103. Ghosal - Eco. Tran. in the Bengal Presidency, PP 44-45
- 103(a) B.T.C. ^{April,} April 17, 1818
104. B.T.C. ^{May,} May 1, 1818
105. Commercial Gen. Letter from Court ^{June,} June 3, 1814; B.T.C. ^{March,} March 13, 1818
106. Bengal MS. Records - W.W. Hunter, Vol. I, P. 105
107. Geoghegan, Some account of silk in India, PP 2-4
108. Monograph, etc; PP 15-30
109. Board of Trade (Commercial) ⁵ June, 1801, ~~January~~ 9, ^{January,} January, 1827
110. Board of Trade (Commercial) 13 January, 1789
111. Board of Trade (Commercial) 29 May, 1789
112. Prinsep- Remarks on the external Commerce and Exchange of Bengal, P. 36
113. H.H. Wilson - A Review of the external Commerce of Bengal, P. 67
114. Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{September,} September 15, 1820
115. Board of Trade (Commercial) ¹⁷ April, 1818 and ^{September,} September 4, 1819
116. Monograph, PP 41-44

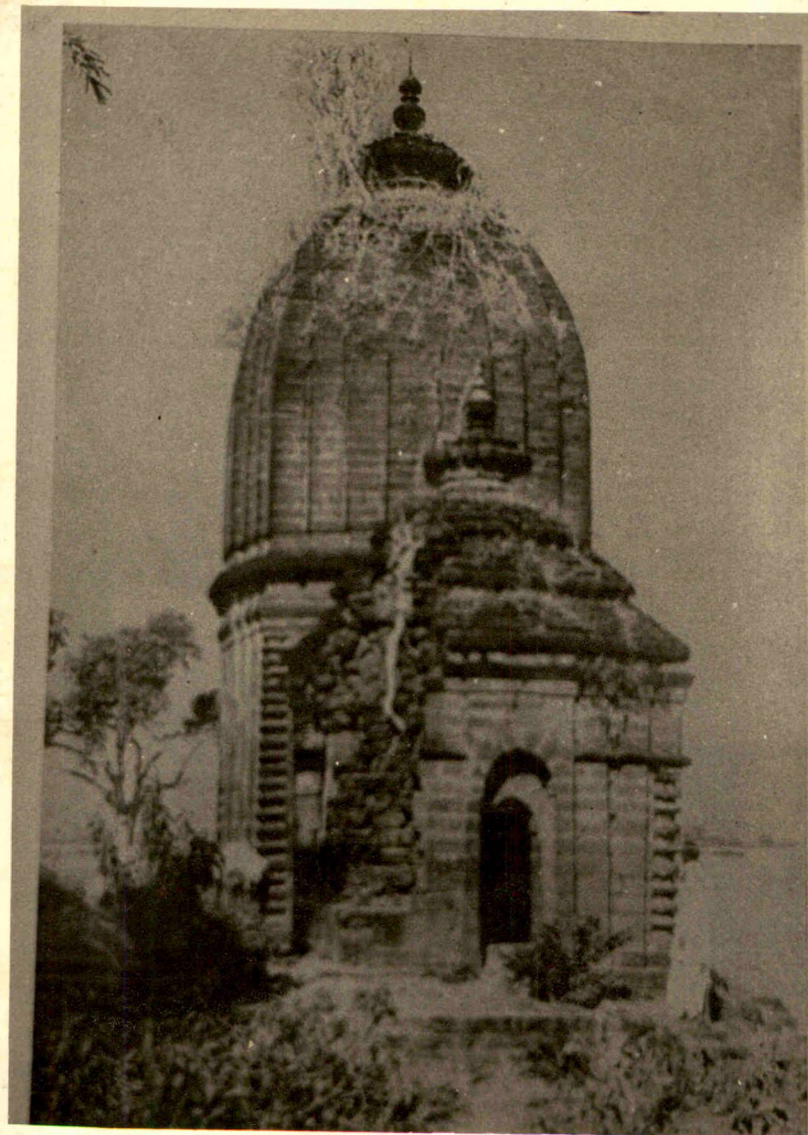
117. J.C. Sinha P.176
118. Ibid
119. Board of Trade (Commercial) ³⁰ May, ~~30~~, 1793
120. Board of Trade (Commercial) November 25, ^{November} December 23, December, 1793
121. Milburn, ii, PP. 254-255
122. Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{June,} June 5, 1801
123. Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{June,} June 5, 1801, Ghosal P.43
124. Milburn, P.257.
125. Board of Trade (Commercial) ³⁰ September ~~30~~, 1808
- 125(a) G.Mitra - Birbhumer Itihas, ii, PP. 12-18
126. Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{October,} October 8, 1819.
127. Monograph, P.32
128. Board of Trade (Commercial) ^{October,} October 8, 1819
129. App. to Rep. from Select Committee on the Affairs of East India Company (1832) ii, Part 2, P.489
130. Board of Trade (Commercial) 27 October, 1789
131. Board of Trade (Commercial) 20 January, 1789, Letter of 14 January, 1789
132. Board of Trade (Commercial) 15 March, 1822
133. Board of Trade (Commercial) 20 July, 1787
134. Beng. Misc. Records. Letters from the Acting Resident of Boalia to Board of Trade, ³ May 3, 1832, ¹⁶ May 16, 1832, and ¹⁴ July 14, 1832, Even before the passing of

the charter Act 1833, the Company in 1831 had let out the sub-ordinate factories under Rampur - Boalia to several of their Pykars on contract.

135. Transactions of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, Vol.VI, 1839, PP 37-38; In this connection The Report of the Silk Committee on the 'Wild silk of Bengal' dated, Calcutta, the 12th March, 1838, may also be consulted.
136. Board of Trade (Commercial) 11 November, 1800
137. Board of Trade (Commercial) ¹⁴ November ~~16~~, 1800
138. Ibid
139. Hamilton, Hindustan, i, P.28, ii, PP 31-59
Henery Ricketts
140. Milburn, ii, PP 271-72
141. Home Public Cons May 2, 1796, No.12; B.T.C.
Nov., 11, 1800
142. Board of Trade (Commercial) ²⁴ June ~~20~~, 1798
143. Board of Trade (Commercial) ³⁰ May ~~30~~, 1793
144. Board of Trade (Commercial) ²¹ November ~~21~~, 1793
145. Board of Trade (Commercial) ¹³ March ~~13~~, 1794
146. Board of Trade (Commercial) ¹³ March ~~13~~, 1794
147. Home Public, ² May ~~2~~, 1796 No.12 - Dobara Sugar-Crystal Sugar, "remarkably good in quality";
B.T.C. ^{April} ~~April~~ 15, 1803
148. Board of Trade (Commercial) ¹⁴ July ~~10~~, 1801

149. Board of Trade (Commercial) ~~February~~ ^{February,} 14, 1804
150. Letter of 28 March; B.T.C. 3~~rd~~ April, 1804
151. Progs.I.H.R.C., 1955, Vol.XXXI (Part II) PP.121-129,
H.R.Ghosal and Ditto Vol.XXXI, No.3, September 1946
PP.200-206

Built in 1653-54 by Raja Raghnath Singh I of Bishnupur, according to Orissan style of temple-architecture. This stone temple with 'Jagmohan' stands at Bikrampur, 6.4 K.M north-west of Ondagram (Rly. station) in the district of Bankura, West Bengal.



CONCLUSION

Studies COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE OF THE AGRARIAN REVOLTS:

The battle of Plassey (1757) marked the beginning of the British Political supremacy in India. Under the British Rule the decadence of handicraft Industries and dependence of the people solely on the agriculture led to extreme poverty of the people¹. "Upto the 18th Century, the economic condition of India was relatively advanced, and Indian methods of production and the Industrial and Commercial organisation could stand comparison with those in vogue in any other part of the world"². By the end of the 19th Century most of the indigenous industries had decayed while there was no sign of established industries on modern lines³. As a result of which the agrarian community became discontented against the Company's Government. This discontent took the shape of open revolts during the century which preceded the movement of 1857-59.

The official records and letters of correspondence contain graphic picture of the agrarian revolts which took place after 1780. Disturbances broke out in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and other parts of India at different times in different places. These revolts gradually took the shape of a general protest against absolute landlordism in cash crop

producing areas of east and central Bengal in the late 19th century. The growth of commercial agriculture which made a deep impact on the peasant economy making the economic condition of the agriculturists more deplorable also culminated in wide-spread disturbances in the country. These disturbances demonstrated the great power of unionism which was fast developing in Bengal among certain sections of the peasantry underlined the basically unstable nature of the landlord-tenant relationship during the seventh and eighth decades of the 19th century and clearly pointed to the inadequacy of the existing laws which regulated these relationships. The sporadic outburst of agrarian disturbances in Bishnupur on various occasions might have had its impact on the outcome of Kol insurrection of Chhotanagpur (1831-32) and the Bhumij revolt of Jungle Mahals (1832-33).

The indiscriminate introduction of regulation bound Cornwallis system had its socio-political and economic impact upon the Kols. The introduction of a complex legalistic administrative system into an undeveloped tribal area had its evil effects. The evil effects also germinated due to the ignorance of tribal language and lack of respect for tribal customs and tradition on the part of the British officers who administered it^{3a}. Tribal society was already feeling the unhappy effects of the hinduization, when the

British penetration began. The Kol insurrection of Chotanagpur (1831-32) was, therefore, a crude form of protest against these changes and foreign influences. It was the outcome of frustration and anger of the tribal people against the new system of Government and laws and the people who either enforced them or took undue advantage of them. The risings of the tribal people were guilty of most heinous crimes, of banditry, murder and arson. Because they knew no other method of effective social protest. A policy of vigorous repression was followed for the suppression of this insurrection. This unrest, however, opened the eyes of the Company's Government which ultimately led to some changes in the administration. In 1834, a new unit known as South-west frontier Agency was created out of previously scattered districts. New regulations were introduced and a sympathetic administrative system was installed. Such paternalist Government was able to maintain peace there for some 20 years. Had they cared for tribal sentiments and their class interests were maintained, the agrarian disturbances of the second half of the 19th century could have been avoided.

The Bhumij revolt of 1832-33 in the Jungle Mahals was also the result of opp-reSSION and exploitation of the tribal people at the hands of the more advanced population

in the society. The loss of their ancestral property and their gradual enslavement prompted violent reaction which in course of time took the shape of open revolt^{3b}. The introduction of Cornwallis system ignoring the tribal interests, needs and customs, the oppression of the amlas, introduction of British Courts and the shrewd darogahs and munsifs, introduction of regular toll upon all the villages were responsible for the outbreak of the Bhumiji Revolt of 1832-33. The Chiefs and Rajas of the Jungle Mahals played important part in introducing outsiders into their estates for their own interests. They themselves and the poor tribal peoples often suffered at the hands of these money-lenders or their agents^{3c}.

The causes of the Bhumij Revolt lie in the pressure of outsiders upon the tribal life and the misguided action of the East India Company in subjecting the tribal people to the complex regulations of their revenue and judicial administration. If the tribal people be placed under their chiefs or Sardar Ghatwals or had the British officials maintained a control of their subordinates, such uprisings might well have been avoided. It is, however, difficult to establish any direct link with the Kol insurrection of Chhotnagpur and the Bhumij

Revolt of Jungle-Mahals^{3d}. The Bhumi j risings popularly known as 'Ganga-Narayan Hangama' might be regarded as a natural continuation of the earlier resistance movements to the British system. The agrarian disturbances in Pabna (1873) and other areas "were really the origin of the discussion and action which led to the enactment of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885"⁴.

The modern scholars who have studied the aspects of these movements in 19th century Bengal are not free from certain limitations. In most cases these studies are based on insufficient data. The Permanent Settlement (1793) gave birth to a section of new land lords who became rich by taking advantage of trends which were accelerated by the early British occupation of Bengal⁵. Armed with law⁶ and powers to cancel all engagements entered into by former landlords with the ryots, these persons were most relentless in their demands⁷. They bought the estates as speculative investments and expected to make the most of the bargains. Having no such social background as the age-old Zamindars, or the previous landlords, their emergence as new land-owners added an element of social tension to the economic exploitation. This was obviously an important reason which made the relation of these new adventurers with their tenants, unfriendly from the very outset⁸. They tried to

rack-rent maximum profits out of the landed property which they bought by adopting extra-legal methods. They demanded enhanced rent, exacted unauthorised cesses and subjected the tenantry even to physical torture if their demands were not fulfilled⁹. The special correspondent of the 'Pioneer' remarked that "It is not high or enhanced rates, the ryots object to; they are willing to pay what would be considered rack-rent, if they were only assured that the rent would be all that they would have to pay and that the amount would be permanent for a length of time". The maximisation of rent was not the main cause of agrarian discontent at least in Pabna (1873) which P. Sinha and Benoy Chaudhury would like us to believe". We may consider the opinion of Kalyan Kumar Sengupta and assume that "The root of agrarian discontent was, however, the tendency of the landlords to tamper with the tenant's right of occupancy"¹². This became evident when some of the leading landlords forcibly extorted from the tenants Kabuliyats (written engagements) which if enforced would have turned the occupancy ryots into mere tenants-at-will¹³. The Pabna revolt was a challenge against the efforts of the landlords to destroy the unity of the peasants. It clearly shows the dissatisfaction of the poor against the well-to-do. The agrarian disturbances in Pabna in 1873, a great event in the history of Bengal in the 19th Century had a spectacular impact on

both official and non-official thinking in Bengal. The event shook the contemporary Bengali society out of any complacency it might have developed about agrarian matters¹⁴.

We may compare this movement with the indigo peasant's revolt (from 1860 onwards). The latter unlike the former, was not a revolt of peasants alone. Numerous other groups viz. the money-lenders, (who were eliminated by the planters), small Zamindars (who were forced into giving planters leases of their estates), and others adversely affected by the indigo system supported the peasants and joined the movement. They all joined hands to destroy the indigo system. Gradually with the growth of nationalist sentiment the indigo agitation pervaded the whole society. Despite the universality of rent enhancement as a rule it did not effect all the peasants in a similar way. The processes of rent-enhancement, the quantum of enhancement, the rank, status and number of peasants affected, etc., differed from place to place. The root cause of the movement arising out of the rent question was very narrow from the very beginning. Moreover, it ignored the interests of under-tenants, who constituted an important section of the agrarian community. This resistance movement arising out of rent-question didnot always succeeded in checking enhancement of rent (particularly in Government estates and

in some Zamindari estates too). The revolt of the indigo peasants nearly destroyed the indigo industry in Bengal. The immediate result of the resistance movement was that the Zamindars became more cautious in future to enhance rent. They were now insistent on the exchange of written pattahs and Kabuliyats. They wanted the terms of payment of rent and other dues stated in the written engagements. There was a general feeling everywhere for wider use of legal means by Zamindars. Consequently there was a considerable rise in the number of civil suits. The civil suits brought by the zamindars were not always meant for defending a just cause. It widened the distrust between the two classes. The movement also contributed to the process of differentiation in the peasantry in some cases. Since the law did not protect their under-tenants, the gap between what they paid to the Zamindars and what they received from the under-tenants became widened. This additional income provided a means to the substantial peasants to cement their position, by widening the scale of lending money to poor peasants and by buying the alienated holdings of the same¹⁵. The indigo revolts instigated the British Government to enact laws for regulating the relations between the Zamindars and the peasants. The introduction of the Rent Act of 1859, 1895 and the Tenancy Act VIII of 1885 were the outcome of these revolts which constitute a significant fact of the

agrarian history of Bengal. The pressure resulted in these two significant historical events viz. the indigo revolt and the agrarian rising in the North Bengal district of Pabna had its impact on the 19th century Agrarian Society of Bengal. It also influenced the contemporary Bengali thinking. Yet the 19th Century society with all its new pressures and changes was essentially a rural society.

From 1780 onwards there were sporadic outbursts of agrarian disturbances in different parts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which were too numerous to mention. These disturbances were in many cases the combined resistance of peasants against the unfavourable attitude of the Government. The cultivation of the commercial Crops (mainly poppy and indigo) had adverse consequences for peasants. The cultivation of indigo universally provoked resistance. The Anti-Government feeling, the hatred against the oppressive landlords and enhancement of rent, etc. all these factors were responsible for the discontent of the poor agrarian community. Their stiffest and united resistance sometimes became too difficult for the Government to cope with. Sometimes strongest military measures were adopted to restore law and order. These disturbances also influenced the then intellectuals of Bengal and eventually the British Government

by enacting new laws and Regulations tried to pacify the agrarian community by upholding their interests and fulfilling their demands to some extent. But these enactments were also not free from limitations and are subject to criticism. These "laws effected some changes, of course, not by bridging the gulf between the old world and the new, but by widening it"¹⁶.

II

CHANGING SOCIETY :-

Agriculture constituted the main economic activity of the people of Bishnupur. The progressive ruralisation of the country during the 19th century under the early phase of the British rule resulted in the traditional dependence of the people on agriculture¹. According to R.C. Dutt, "if agriculture prospered, the people are well off, if crops failed, there was famine in the land"². As the agriculture in Bengal was relatively backward, the economic condition of the agriculturists was extremely precarious. The successive famines and the callousness of the Company's Government in adopting effective agrarian policies led to the extreme poverty of the peasants. As a result of which several agrarian revolts broke out in different parts of the country in different times. Such agrarian disturbances, however, drew the attention of both the Government and the Indian national leaders at the closing years of the 19th century.

The district of Bankura even in recent times of urbanisation and industrialisation maintained its overwhelming agro-economic base. It is clear from the census of 1951 that 81.75 p.c. of the total population of this district depends on agriculture. Apart from the towns of Bishnupur and Bankura and few artisan's settlements at Sonamukhi, Rajagram and Kotulpur, the rural way of life and habits is visible in the country side. Geographically the district is distinctly divisible into two regions:

- (1) The flat alluvial eastern part continuous with the Gangetic plains and
- (2) The undulating tract with pronounced laterite incrustation to the west constituting the outer-line of the Chhotnagpur plateau.

So the life pattern in a single village cannot expose the common characteristics of all the villages of the district. From the population point of view, the western region is marked by heavier concentration of Santals, Bauris and Bagdis and Bhumijis then in the east, where Bengali Hindu caste mostly reside with varied social customs, habits and cultural heritage. According to hindu social system different caste-groups are placed in a hierarchical gradation. The Brahmins occupied the highest position³.

The spread of English education by the middle of

the 19th century⁴ might be regarded as the most important element⁵ of mobility in the life of the Bengali gentry. But the spread of English education in rural areas faced some social opposition from the orthodox section of the people who were mostly conservative Brahmins (Kulins)⁶.

In the traditional family system there were certain changes. A large number of middle class people began to settle in urban and semi-urban areas in the interest of service and other professions. More over, the deplorable economic condition of villages forced a large number of people to go to towns in search of suitable employment or opportunity for the maintenance of their livelihood. The system of joint family thus gradually ceased to exist and smaller family units in villages began to emerge. By the end of the 19th century the metropolitan society was practically divorced from the rural attachment. This physical dissociation from rural society marked some changes on traditional way of life⁷.

In villages the peasantry lived in a distressed condition. The laws of the Company's Government placed the lot of the peasantry under such a system which left their rights entirely undefined. To the middle class Bengali intellectuals the poor plight of the peasants was a matter of serious concern. They advocated for the improvement of

the condition of the peasantry. Such economic enslavement of the agrarian population in rural society led to a series of revolts against the Company's Government. Their discontent knew no bounds. But their protests in the shape of revolts and disturbances could not, however, make any improvement on their lots. Though some minor administrative changes were introduced from time to time, but it was not enough to fulfill their legitimate demands for the betterment of their socio-economic position.

In the second half of the 19th century the growth of metropolitan city with its industrial adjuncts tended to infuse a new element of urbanisation into the Bengali society. The pattern of migration to the urban areas does not show any marked tendency on the part of the weavers or artisans, economically the most affected class in the 19th century, towards migration⁷. The largest section of the migrants from the subarban areas consisted of the Brahmins and the Kayasthas who were high-caste people and as such belonged to the class of landed gentry. The decline of production and the out-break of epidemic in villages instigated the gentry to settle in urban areas. The towns mainly inhabited by the gentry gradually lost its ties with the villages⁹ and there emerged a modified form of society which undoubtedly had its root in the traditional society of rural Bengal.

III

CULTURAL LIFE IN BISHNUPUR:

(a) Education, Literature, etc.:-

When the flowers of Bengal renaissance bloomed, Bishnupur represented its old mediæval type of learning and education. Only the economically powerful castes like the Kshatriyas, Chhatris, Rajputs and Vaidyas patronised the learned Brahmins who generally imparted education through Sanskrit medium. But the majority of population belonging to poor tribal castes lived in the darkness of ignorance. The Malla Kings of Bishnupur were the patrons of traditional learning over wide areas throughout their kingdom. They settled Brahmin pundits (learned Brahmins) with grants of rent-free lands, who established tols, Chatuspatni, Pathsalas, etc., for the advancement of learning. Thus the country represented the character of mediaeval learning.

Hundreds of hand written manuscripts had been recovered from this district ~~which of Bankura~~ which testified to the wide range of education in the country during the mediaeval and late mediaeval period. The most important among the mediaeval men of letters were Badu, Chandidasa, author of 'Srikrishna-kirtana'¹, Ramai Pundit²,

the author of 'Sunya Purana' and Sankar Kavichandra Chakravarti who composed a Mangal Kavya ballad in the 17th century. The culture of vaisnava lyrics also got a strong foothold during the ⁱreign of pious vaisnava king Bir Hambir. Mention may be made to Manikram Ganguly, author of a 'Dharma Mangal Kavya'. Another Dharma Mangal poet Sitaram Das was also well-known for his original compositions. A third Dharma-Mangal poet Ram Chandra Bandopadhyaya of village Chamat in Mallabhum wrote his piece in 1732. at the pious wish of the Malla~~s~~ King³ Gopal Singh. The subhankar of Bishnupur who composed Bengali couplets composed in the payar system of rhyming explaining as a favourite means of instruction in traditional tols and Pathasalas. Apart from these, under the patronage of the Malla kings, the culture of Sanskrit learning in the fields of Smriti, Nyaya, Vyakarana, Kavya and Jyotisha as well as the culture of Vaisnava lyrics and philosophy made a tremendous headway. Though the scholarly compositions were numerous, ~~but the state of general education were numerous,~~ but the state of general education was very poor. The advent of the English East India Company and their attempts to impart English education successfully got a strong foot-hold in other parts of Bengal where many of the middle class people took modern education. But so far as Bishnupur is concerned, it still represented the mediaeval character of learning. The socio-economic condition of the

majority of population of this region was not favourable for the spread of such modern education. Writing even in 1863, J.E.Gastrell⁴ quoted a Deputy Collector's remarks made in 1847 and stated that "Education is very little attended to". In 1876 Hunter⁵ almost echoed Gastrell. Throughout the 19th century no remarkable improvement in the field of general education in Bishnupur could be found, though the efforts of ~~Christians~~^{Christian} missionaries for the introduction of modern education⁶ started after 1870

(b) Music:-

The most significant contribution of Bishnupur in the cultural life of Bengal was, however, in the field of music. A distinct school of 'Drupad' singing which sprang up in Bishnupur became the only school in Bengal of North Indian classical music.⁷ This school was popularly known as "Vishnupur Gharana". The cultivation of music began to thrive at Bishnupur under the patronage of Raghunath Sinch II (1694-1730 A.D). Thereafter, various singers enriched this school and by the middle of the 18th century it was at the height of its glory. Mention may be made to Ramshankar Bhattacharya who established the fame of Bishnupur as a seat of Dhrupad culture.⁸ His disciples also had become famous in this style of singing. Ram Keshab Bhattacharya (in the middle of the 19th century), Keshab Lal Chakravarty, Kshetra Mohan Goswami, Dinabandhu Goswami and Anatalal Bandopadhyaya were the stalwarts of

the period in the field of music. Among other singers mention may be made to Jadunath and Radhika Prasad Goswami who earned wide reputation. Two illustrious sons of Anantalal Bando-padhyaya viz. Ramaprasanna and Gopeswar carried forward the efforts of their father until recent times.⁹ The simple and orthodox style of the 'Vishnupur school of music' rightfully claimed a tradition of antiquity. It might have derived its origin from Tansen or any other source.¹⁰ The culture of music was definitely restricted within a narrow circle. The common people had nothing to do with it. Under the patronage of the kings and the richer section of the society it flourished. It gave pleasure to the Babus and the rich. In spite of its wide range of popularity the musical situation of Bishnupur was not very encouraging, as it failed either to cater pleasure to the toiling masses or to offer opportunities to the comm^on^o's to learn the art of this music.

(c) Art and Architecture:-

Bishnupur was well-known for its numerous architectural constructions. A large number of temples, forts and Buildings constructed by the Malla rullers and numerous tanks and lakes excavated by them turned Bishnupur into "a renowned city in the wolrd".¹¹ According to T.Bloch (one time Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India, Eastern Circle), "The temple of Bishnupur represent the most complete set of specimens of the peculiar Bengali style

of temple architecture".¹² The materials generally used for the construction of the temples were either brick or laterite which were locally available.¹³ A wide variety of magnificent temples built both in bricks and laterite were famous for their terracotta designs.¹⁴ No place in Bengal except Bishnupur can boast of such curious architectural structures with beautiful terra-cottawork. The sound economic position of the Malla Princes from the end of the 16th century enabled them to spend their excess accumulated treasure in temple building and other architectural activities. The Permanent Settlement aimed at maximisation of revenues had a ruinous effect on the financial condition of the royal family of Bishnupur. The stringent laws and over-assessment sapped the foundation of their authority and ultimately dismembered their kingdoms. The history of the once powerful and richer kings of Mallabhum thus became a story of the past. The architectural constructions which gathered considerable momentum from the end of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century thus came to an end with decline of the Malla power.

IV

Bishnupur after 1833:-

The sporadic peasant's revolts which broke out in Bishnupur enforced the Company's Government to make some administrative changes. By the Regulations XIII of 1833,

the district of Jungle-Mahals were abolished. In 1834 the town of Bankura was transferred from the South-west frontier Agency (a new administrative unit that was formed by Reg. XIII of 1833) to Burdwan and a joint Magistrate and Deputy Collector was placed in charge of Bishnupur with headquarters at Bankura. In 1837 Bishnupur with the thana of Kotalpur was constituted into a district of West Burdwan. In 1808, as it has been stated the estates of the Raja of Bishnupur was sold by the Company's Government for arrears of revenue. Their estates thus lost, the Rajas were dependent upon meagre pensions granted by the Government.¹ Such was the poor plight of the descendants of the famous Bishnupur Raj family who in the past, made remarkable contribution to the advancement of their country and secured the admiration of their subjects, for their act of benevolence and enlightenment.

The administrative changes after 1833 could not however, improve the economic position of the agrarian community. Bishnupur, being primarily an agricultural region, agrarian relations are very important in the socio-economic context. Prior to the acquisition of the Diwani by the East India Company major part of the present district Bankura belonged to the Bishnupur Raj. The Rajas used to settle portions of their territories to subordinate chiefs for the protection of the frontiers and maintenance of law and order. But between 1765-1793 most of the Zamindars lost substantial

parts, of their territories due to maximisation of land revenue. The estates of the defaulting Zamindars were generally purchased by new wealthy merchants or other non-resident adventurers from urban areas. These two classes of landlords ^{were interested only in maximum rents they could get from the land.} The process of subletting lands continued² unchecked, giving rise to several middlemen (viz, Pattanidars, Darpatni, Sah-patni etc), making the condition of the original producers more deplorable. The age-old Mandal system thus became a story of the past. The santals, the Bhumj and other original inhabitants of the country became impoverished. Their growing indebtedness to the mahajans (money-lenders) also generated dissatisfaction³ which in course of time took the shape of uprisings and revolts. Such wide-spread discontent among the agrarian community against the Company's Government and the richer section of the society created by them found its expression in protests and risings.

The economic enslavement of the common people particularly in villages was the outcome of the policy of exploitation carried on by the Company's Government. The peasant-revolts from 1780 onwards, were, however, premature attempts to free themselves from such ^{exploitation and official torture} ~~exploitative~~ system at a ^{later} ~~latter~~ period were much well organised and testified to the greater degree of solidarity amongst the agrarian community, which were probably the outcome of these sporadic outbursts.

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